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THE WORKS

OF

HENRIK IBSEN

LITTLE EYOLF
JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN
WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN
AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE
THE WILD DUCK

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY

WILLIAM ARCHER

JEFFERSON PRESS

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LITTLE EYOLF

LITTLE EYOLF

INTRODUCTION *

Little Eyolf was written in Christiania during 1894, and published in Copenhagen on December 11 in that year. By this time Ibsen's correspondence has become so scanty as to afford us no clue to what may be called the biographical antecedents of the play. Even of anecdotic history very little attaches to it. For only one of the characters has a definite model been suggested. Ibsen himself told his French translator, Count Prozor, that the original of the Rat-Wife was "a little old woman who came to kill rats at the school where he was educated. She carried a little dog in a bag, and it was said that children had been drowned through following her." This means that Ibsen did not himself adapt to his uses the legend so familiar to us in Browning's *Pied Piper of Hamelin*, but found it ready adapted by the popular imagination of his native place, Skien. "This idea," Ibsen continued to Count Prozor, "was just what I wanted for bringing about the disappearance of Little Eyolf, in whom the infatuation[1] and the feebleness of his father are reproduced, but concentrated, exaggerated, as one often sees them in the son of such a father."

[1] The French word used by Count Prozor is "infatuation." I can think of no other rendering for it; but I do not quite know what it means as applied to Allmers and Eyolf.

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Dr. Elias tells us that a well-known lady-artist, who in middle life suggested to Ibsen the figure of Lona Hessel, was in later years the model for the Rat-Wife. There is no inconsistency between these two accounts of the matter. The idea was doubtless suggested by his recollection of the rat-catcher of Skien, while traits of manner and physiognomy might be borrowed from the lady in question.

The *Literary Remains* contain a first draft of *Little Eyolf*, with several gaps in it, and yet fairly complete. It shows once more how after having invented a play, the poet set about re-inventing it, and how the re-invention was apt to determine its poetic value. In this case he had extraordinary difficulty with the characters' names, which he changed about incessantly. His first list of characters ran thus:

Harald Borgheim.
Johanna, his wife.
Rita, his sister.
Alfred, his son, eleven years old.
Eivind Almer, road-engineer.
Miss Varg, Johanna's aunt.

Miss Varg is the character who ultimately became the grimly-fascinating Rat-Wife. After he ceased to be "Borgheim" Allmers became "Skioldheim." Eyolf, after beginning as "Alfred" was for some time "Eivind." Rita was "Andrea" all through the second act. Not till the third act was reached had the names been finally allotted. It seems that the poet's first idea was simply to study a rather commonplace wife's jealousy of a

rather commonplace child. The lameness of Eyolf was an afterthought; there is no trace of it in the draft. And as Eyolf is not lame, the terrible cry of "the crutch is floating" must also have been an afterthought, as well as the almost intolerable scene of recrimination between Allmers and Rita as to the accident which caused his lameness. In fact, nearly everything that gives the play its depth, its horror, and its elevation came as an afterthought. There is a slight—a very slight—hint of the "evil eye" motive, but the idea is in no way developed. Instead of the exquisite beauty of Rita's resolve to try to "make her peace with the great open eyes," and to fill the blank within her with "something that is a little like love," we have a page of almost common sentimentalizing over Eyolf's continued existence in their hearts. And instead of Alfred's wonderful tale of his meeting with Death in the mountains, we find a poem which he reads to Rita!—the verses Ibsen had written as a first hint for *The Master Builder*. In no case, perhaps, did Ibsen's revision work such a transfiguration as in this play.

The verse quoted on pp. 52 and 53 is the last line of a very well-known poem by Johan Sebastian Welhaven, entitled *Republikanerne*, written in 1839. An unknown guest in a Paris restaurant has been challenged by a noisy party of young Frenchmen to join them in drinking a health to Poland. He refuses; they denounce him as a craven and a slave; he bares his breast and shows the scars of wounds received in fighting for the country whose lost cause has become a subject for conventional enthusiasm and windy rhetoric.

"De saae paa hverandre. Han vandred sin vei.
De havde champagne, men rörte den ei.

"They looked at each other. He went on his way. There stood their champagne, but they did not touch it." The champagne incident leads me to wonder whether the relation between Rita and Allmers may not have been partly suggested to Ibsen by the relation between Charlotte Stieglitz and her weakling of a husband. Their story must have been known to him through George Brandes's *Young Germany*, if not more directly. "From time to time," says Dr. Brandes, "there came over her what she calls her champagne-mood; she grieves that this is no longer the case with him."[1] Did the germ of the incident lie in these words?

The first performance of the play in Norway took place at the Christiania Theatre on January 15, 1895, Fru Wettergren playing Rita and Fru Dybwad, Asta. In Copenhagen (March 13, 1895) Fru Oda Nielsen and Fru Hennings played Rita and Asta respectively, while Emil Poulsen played Allmers. The first German Rita (Deutsches Theater, Berlin, January 12, 1895) was Frau Agnes Sorma, with Reicher as Allmers. Six weeks later Frl. Sandrock played Rita at the Burg-theater, Vienna. In May, 1895, the play was acted by M. Lugné-Poë's company in Paris. The first performance in English took place at the Avenue Theatre, London, on the afternoon of November 23, 1896, with Miss Janet Achurch as Rita, Miss Elizabeth Robins as Asta, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell as the Rat-Wife. Miss Achurch's Rita made a profound impression.

[1] *Main Currents of Nineteenth Century Literature*, vol. vi. p. 299.

Mrs. Patrick Campbell afterwards played the part in a short series of evening performances. In the spring of 1895 the play was acted in Chicago by a company of Scandinavian amateurs, presumably in Norwegian, but it was not acted in English in America until Madame Nazimova added it to her repertory in the season of 1907–1908.

As the external history of *Little Eyolf* is so short, I am tempted to depart from my usual practice, and say a few words as to its matter and meaning.

George Brandes, writing of this play, has rightly observed that "a kind of dualism has always been perceptible in Ibsen; he pleads the cause of Nature, and he castigates Nature with mystic morality; only sometimes Nature is allowed the first voice, sometimes morality. In *The Master Builder* and in *Ghosts* the lover of Nature in Ibsen was predominant; here, as in *Brand* and *The Wild Duck*, the castigator is in the ascendant." So clearly is this the case in *Little Eyolf* that Ibsen seems almost to fall into line with Mr. Thomas Hardy. To say nothing of analogies of detail between *Little Eyolf* and *Jude the Obscure*, there is this radical analogy, that they are both utterances of a profound pessimism, both indictments of Nature.

But while Mr. Hardy's pessimism is plaintive and passive, Ibsen's is stoical and almost bracing. It is true that in this play he is no longer the mere "indignation-pessimist" whom Dr. Brandes quite justly recognised in his earlier works. His analysis has gone deeper into the heart of things, and he has put off the satirist and the iconoclast. But there is in his thought an

incompressible energy of revolt. A pessimist in contemplation, he remains a meliorist in action. He is not, like Mr. Hardy, content to let the flag droop half-mast high; his protagonist still runs it up to the mast-head, and looks forward steadily to the "heavy day of work" before him. But although the note of the conclusion is resolute, almost serene, the play remains none the less an indictment of Nature, or at least of that egoism of passion which is one of her most potent subtleties. In this view, Allmers becomes a type of what we may roughly call the "free moral agent"; Eyolf, a type of humanity conceived as passive and suffering, thrust will-less into existence, with boundless aspirations and cruelly limited powers; Rita, a type of the egoistic instinct which is "a consuming fire"; and Asta, a type of the beneficent love which is possible only so long as it is exempt from "the law of change." Allmers, then, is self-conscious egoism, egoism which can now and then break its chains, look in its own visage, realise and shrink from itself; while Rita, until she has passed through the awful crisis which forms the matter of the play, is unconscious, reckless, and ruthless egoism, exigent and jealous, "holding to its rights," and incapable even of rising into the secondary stage of maternal love. The offspring and the victim of these egoisms is Eyolf, "little wounded warrior," who longs to scale the heights and dive into the depths, but must remain for ever chained to the crutch of human infirmity. For years Allmers has been a restless and half-reluctant slave to Rita's imperious temperament. He has dreamed and theorised about "responsibility," and has kept

Eyolf poring over his books, in the hope that, despite his misfortune, he may one day minister to parental vanity. Finally he breaks away from Rita, for the first time "in all these ten years," goes up "into the infinite solitudes," looks Death in the face, and returns shrinking from passion, yearning towards selfless love, and filled with a profound and remorseful pity for the lot of poor maimed humanity. He will "help Eyolf to bring his desires into harmony with what lies attainable before him." He will "create a conscious happiness in his mind." And here the drama opens.

Before the Rat-Wife enters, let me pause for a moment to point out that here again Ibsen adopts that characteristic method which, in writing of *The Lady from the Sea* and *The Master Builder*, I have compared to the method of Hawthorne. The story he tells is not really, or rather not inevitably, supernatural. Everything is explicable within the limits of nature; but supernatural agency is also vaguely suggested, and the reader's imagination is stimulated, without any absolute violence to his sense of reality. On the plane of everyday life, then, the Rat-Wife is a crazy and uncanny old woman, fabled by the peasants to be a werewolf in her leisure moments, who goes about the country killing vermin. Coming across an impressionable child, she tells him a preposterous tale, adapted from the old "Pied Piper" legends, of her method of fascinating her victims. The child, whose imagination has long dwelt on this personage, is in fact hypnotised by her, follows her down to the sea, and, watching her row away, turns dizzy, falls in, and is drowned. There is nothing

impossible, nothing even improbable, in this. At the same time, there cannot be the least doubt, I think, that in the poet's mind the Rat-Wife is the symbol of Death, of the "still, soft darkness" that is at once so fearful and so fascinating to humanity. This is clear not only in the text of her single scene, but in the fact that Allmers, in the last act, treats her and his "fellow-traveller" of that night among the mountains, not precisely as identical, but as interchangeable, ideas. To tell the truth, I have even my own suspicions as to who is meant by "her sweetheart," whom she "lured" long ago, and who is now "down where all the rats are." This theory I shall keep to myself; it may be purely fantastic, and is at best inessential. What is certain is that death carried off little Eyolf, and that, of all he was, only the crutch is left, mute witness to his hapless lot.

He is gone; there was so little to bind him to life that he made not even a moment's struggle against the allurement of the "long, sweet sleep." Then, for the first time, the depth of the egoism which had created and conditioned his little life bursts upon his parents' horror-stricken gaze. Like accomplices in crime, they turn upon and accuse each other—"sorrow makes them wicked and hateful." Allmers, as the one whose eyes were already half opened, is the first to carry the war into the enemy's country; but Rita is not slow to retort, and presently they both have to admit that their recriminations are only a vain attempt to drown the voice of self-reproach. In a sort of fierce frenzy they tear away veil after veil from their souls, until they realise that

Eyolf never existed at all, so to speak, for his own sake, but only for the sake of their passions and vanities. "Isn't it curious," says Rita, summing up the matter, "that we should grieve like this over a little stranger boy?"

In blind self-absorption they have played with life and death, and now "the great open eyes" of the stranger boy will be for ever upon them. Allmers would fain take refuge in a love untainted by the egoism, and unexposed to the revulsions, of passion. But not only is Asta's pity for Rita too strong to let her countenance this desertion: she has discovered that her relation to Allmers is *not* "exempt from the law of change," and she "takes flight from him—and from herself." Meanwhile it appears that the agony which Allmers and Rita have endured in probing their wounds has been, as Halvard Solness would say, "salutary self-torture." The consuming fire of passion is now quenched, but "it has left an empty place within them," and they feel a common need "to fill it up with something that is a little like love." They come to remember that there are other children in the world on whom reckless instinct has thrust the gift of life—neglected children, stunted and maimed in mind if not in body. And now that her egoism is seared to the quick, the mother-instinct asserts itself in Rita. She will take these children to her—these children to whom her hand and her heart have hitherto been closed. They shall be outwardly in Eyolf's place, and perhaps in time they may fill the place in her heart that should have been Eyolf's. Thus she will try to "make her peace with the great open

eyes." For now, at last, she has divined the secret of the unwritten book on "human responsibility," and has realised that motherhood means—atonement.

So I read this terrible and beautiful work of art. This, I think, is *a* meaning inherent in it—not perhaps *the* meaning, and still less all the meanings. Indeed, its peculiar fascination for me, among all Ibsen's works, lies in the fact that it seems to touch life at so many different points. But I must not be understood as implying that Ibsen constructed the play with any such definitely allegoric design as is here set forth. I do not believe that this creator of men and women ever started from an abstract conception. He did not first compose his philosophic tune and then set his puppets dancing to it. The germ in his mind was dramatic, not ethical; it was only as the drama developed that its meanings dawned upon him; and he left them implicit and fragmentary, like the symbolism of life itself, seldom formulated, never worked out with schematic precision. He simply took a cutting from the tree of life, and, planting it in the rich soil of his imagination, let it ramify and burgeon as it would.

Even if one did not know the date of *Little Eyolf*, one could confidently assign it to the latest period of Ibsen's career, on noting a certain difference of scale between its foundations and its superstructure. In his earlier plays, down to and including *Hedda Gabler*, we feel his invention at work to the very last moment, often with more intensity in the last act than in the first; in his later plays he seems to be in haste to pass as early as possible from invention to pure analysis.

In this play, after the death of Eyolf (surely one of the most inspired "situations" in all drama) there is practically no external action whatsoever. Nothing happens save in the souls of the characters; there is no further invention, but rather what one may perhaps call inquisition. This does not prevent the second act from being quite the most poignant, or the third act from being one of the most moving, that Ibsen ever wrote. Far from wishing to depreciate the play, I rate it more highly, perhaps, than most critics—among the very greatest of Ibsen's achievements. I merely note as a characteristic of the poet's latest manner this disparity of scale between the work foreshadowed, so to speak, and the work completed. We shall find it still more evident in the case of *John Gabriel Borkman.*

LITTLE EYOLF
(1894)

CHARACTERS

ALFRED ALLMERS, *landed proprietor and man of letters, formerly a tutor.*
MRS. RITA ALLMERS, *his wife.*
EYOLF, *their child, nine years old.*
MISS ASTA ALLMERS, *Alfred's younger half-sister.*
ENGINEER BORGHEIM.
THE RAT-WIFE.

The action takes place on ALLMERS'S *property, bordering on the fiord, twelve or fourteen miles from Christiania.*

LITTLE EYOLF

PLAY IN THREE ACTS

ACT FIRST

A pretty and richly-decorated garden-room, full of furniture, flowers, and plants. At the back, open glass doors, leading out to a verandah. An extensive view over the fiord. In the distance, wooded hillsides. A door in each of the side walls, the one on the right a folding door, placed far back. In front on the right, a sofa, with cushions and rugs. Beside the sofa, a small table, and chairs. In front, on the left, a larger table, with arm-chairs around it. On the table stands an open hand-bag. It is an early summer morning, with warm sunshine.

Mrs. RITA ALLMERS *stands beside the table, facing towards the left, engaged in unpacking the bag. She is a handsome, rather tall, well-developed blonde, about thirty years of age, dressed in a light-coloured morning-gown.*

Shortly after, Miss ASTA ALLMERS *enters by the door on the right, wearing a light brown summer dress, with hat, jacket, and parasol. Under her arm she carries a locked portfolio of considerable size. She is slim, of middle height, with dark hair, and deep, earnest eyes. Twenty-five years old.*

ASTA.

[*As she enters.*] Good-morning, my dear Rita.

RITA.

[*Turns her head, and nods to her.*] What! is that you, Asta? Come all the way from town so early?

ASTA.

[*Takes off her things, and lays them on a chair beside the door.*] Yes, such a restless feeling came over me. I felt I m u s t come out to-day, and see how little Eyolf was getting on—and you too. [*Lays the portfolio on the table beside the sofa.*] So I took the steamer, and here I am.

RITA.

[*Smiling to her.*] And I daresay you met one or other of your friends on board? Quite by chance, of course.

ASTA.

[*Quietly.*] No, I did not meet a soul I knew. [*Sees the bag.*] Why, Rita, what have you got there?

RITA.

[*Still unpacking.*] Alfred's travelling-bag. Don't you recognise it?

ASTA.

[*Joyfully, approaching her.*] What! Has Alfred come home?

RITA.

Yes, only think—he came quite unexpectedly by the late train last night.

ASTA.

Oh, then t h a t was what my feeling meant! It was that that drew me out here! And he hadn't written a line to let you know? Not even a post-card?

RITA.

Not a single word.

ASTA.

Did he not even telegraph?

RITA.

Yes, an hour before he arrived—quite curtly and coldly. [*Laughs.*] Don't you think that was like him, Asta?

ASTA.

Yes; he goes so quietly about everything.

RITA.

But that made it all the more delightful to have him again.

ASTA.

Yes, I am sure it would.

RITA.

A whole fortnight before I expected him!

ASTA.

And is he quite well? Not in low spirits?

RITA.

[*Closes the bag with a snap, and smiles at her.*] He looked quite transfigured as he stood in the doorway.

ASTA.

And was he not the least bit tired either?

RITA.

Oh, yes, he seemed to be tired enough—very tired, in fact. But, poor fellow, he had come on foot the greater part of the way.

ASTA.

And then perhaps the high mountain air may have been rather too keen for him.

RITA.

Oh, no; I don't think so at all. I haven't heard him cough once.

ASTA.

Ah, there you see now! It was a good thing, after all, that the doctor talked him into taking this tour.

RITA.

Yes, now that it is safely over.—But I can tell you it has been a terrible time for me, Asta. I have never cared to talk about it—and you so seldom came out to see me, too——

ASTA.

Yes, I daresay that wasn't very nice of me—but——

RITA.

Well, well, well, of course you had your school to attend to in town. [*Smiling.*] And then our road-maker friend—of course he was away too.

ASTA.

Oh, don't talk like that, Rita.

RITA.

Very well, then; we will leave the road-maker out of the question.—You can't think how I have been longing for Alfred! How empty the place seemed! How desolate! Ugh, it felt as if there had been a funeral in the house!

ASTA.

Why, dear me, only six or seven weeks——

RITA.

Yes; but you must remember that Alfred has never been away from me before—never so much as twenty-four hours. Not once in all these ten years.

ASTA.

No; but that is just why I really think it was high time he should have a little outing this year. He ought to have gone for a tramp in the mountains every summer—he really ought.

RITA.

[*Half smiling.*] Oh yes, it's all very well for you to talk. If I were as—as reasonable as you, I suppose I

should have let him go before—perhaps. But I positively could not, Asta! It seemed to me I should never get him back again. Surely you can understand t h a t?

ASTA.

No. But I daresay that is because I have no one to lose.

RITA.

[*With a teasing smile.*] Really? No one at all?

ASTA.

Not that *I* know of. [*Changing the subject.*] But tell me, Rita, where is Alfred? Is he still asleep?

RITA.

Oh, not at all. He got up as early as ever to-day.

ASTA.

Then he can't have been so very tired after all.

RITA.

Yes, he was last night—when he arrived. But now he has had little Eyolf with him in his room for a whole hour and more.

ASTA.

Poor little white-faced boy! Has he to be for ever at his lessons again?

RITA.

[*With a slight shrug.*] Alfred will have it so, you know.

ASTA.

Yes; but I think you ought to put down your foot about it, Rita.

RITA.

[*Somewhat impatiently.*] Oh no; come now, I really cannot meddle with that. Alfred knows so much better about these things than I do. And what would you have Eyolf do? He can't run about and play, you see—like other children.

ASTA.

[*With decision.*] I will talk to Alfred about this.

RITA.

Yes, do; I wish you would.—Oh! here he is.

[ALFRED ALLMERS, *dressed in light summer clothes, enters by the door on the left, leading* EYOLF *by the hand. He is a slim, lightly-built man of about thirty-six or thirty-seven, with gentle eyes, and thin brown hair and beard. His expression is serious and thoughtful.* EYOLF *wears a suit cut like a uniform, with gold braid and gilt military buttons. He is lame, and walks with a crutch under his left arm. His leg is shrunken. He is undersized, and looks delicate, but has beautiful intelligent eyes.*

ALLMERS.

[*Drops* EYOLF'S *hand, goes up to* ASTA *with an expression of marked pleasure, and holds out both his hands to her.*] Asta! My dearest Asta! To think of your coming! To think of my seeing you so soon!

ASTA.

I felt I must——. Welcome home again!

ALLMERS.

[*Shaking her hands.*] Thank you for coming.

RITA.

Doesn't he look well?

ASTA.

[*Gazes fixedly at him.*] Splendid! Quite splendid! His eyes are so much brighter! And I suppose you have done a great deal of writing on your travels? [*With an outburst of joy.*] I shouldn't wonder if you had finished the whole book, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] The book? Oh, the book——

ASTA.

Yes, I was sure you would find it go so easily when once you got away.

ALLMERS.

So I thought too. But, do you know, I didn't find it so at all. The truth is, I have not written a line of the book.

ASTA.

Not a line?

RITA.

Oho! I wondered when I found all the paper lying untouched in your bag.

ASTA.

But, my dear Alfred, what have you been doing all this time?

ALLMERS.

[*Smiling.*] Only thinking and thinking and thinking.

RITA.

[*Putting her arm round his neck.*] And thinking a little, too, of those you had left at home?

ALLMERS.

Yes, you may be sure of that. I have thought a great deal of you—every single day.

RITA.

[*Taking her arm away.*] Ah, that is all I care about.

ASTA.

But you haven't even touched the book! And yet you can look so happy and contented! That is not what you generally do—I mean when your work is going badly.

ALLMERS.

You are right there. You see, I have been such a fool hitherto. All the best that is in you goes into thinking. What you put on paper is worth very little.

ASTA.

[*Exclaiming.*] Worth very little!

RITA.

[*Laughing.*] What an absurd thing to say, Alfred.

EYOLF.

[*Looks confidingly up at him.*] Oh yes, Papa, what y o u write is worth a great deal!

ALLMERS.

[*Smiling and stroking his hair.*] Well, well, since y o u say so—— But I can tell you, some one is coming after me who will do it better.

EYOLF.

Who can that be? Oh, tell me!

ALLMERS.

Only wait—you may be sure he will come, and let us hear of him.

EYOLF.

And what will you do then?

ALLMERS.

[*Seriously.*] Then I will go to the mountains again——

RITA.

Fie, Alfred! For shame!

ALLMERS.

—up to the peaks and the great waste places.

EYOLF.

Papa, don't you think I shall soon be well enough for you to take me with you?

ALLMERS.

[*With painful emotion.*] Oh, yes, perhaps, my little boy.

EYOLF.

It would be so splendid, you know, if I could climb the mountains, like you.

ASTA.

[*Changing the subject.*] Why, how beautifully you are dressed to-day, Eyolf!

EYOLF.

Yes, don't you think so, Auntie?

ASTA.

Yes, indeed. Is it in honour of Papa that you have got your new clothes on?

EYOLF.

Yes, I asked Mama to let me. I wanted so to let Papa see me in them.

ALLMERS.

[*In a low voice, to* RITA.] You shouldn't have given him clothes like that.

RITA.

[*In a low voice.*] Oh, he has teased me so long about them—he had set his heart on them. He gave me no peace.

EYOLF.

And I forgot to tell you, Papa—Borgheim has bought me a new bow. And he has taught me how to shoot with it too.

ALLMERS.

Ah, there now—that's just the sort of thing for you, Eyolf.

EYOLF.

And next time he comes, I shall ask him to teach me to swim, too.

ALLMERS.

To swim! Oh, what makes you want to learn swimming?

EYOLF.

Well, you know, all the boys down at the beach can swim. I am the only one that can't.

ALLMERS.

[*With emotion, taking him in his arms.*] You shall learn whatever you like—everything you really want to.

EYOLF.

Then do you know what I want most of all, Papa?

ALLMERS.

No; tell me

EYOLF.

I want most of all to be a soldier.

ALLMERS.

Oh, little Eyolf, there are many, many other things that are better than that.

EYOLF.

Ah, but when I grow big, then I shall h a v e to be a soldier. You know that, don't you?

ALLMERS.

[*Clenching his hands together.*] Well, well, well: we shall see——

ASTA.

[*Seating herself at the table on the left.*] Eyolf! Come here to me, and I will tell you something.

EYOLF.

[*Goes up to her.*] What is it, Auntie?

ASTA.

What do you think, Eyolf—I have seen the Rat-Wife.

EYOLF.

What! Seen the Rat-Wife! Oh, you're only making a fool of me!

ASTA.

No; it's quite true. I saw her yesterday.

EYOLF.

Where did you see her?

ASTA.

I saw her on the road, outside the town.

ALLMERS.

I saw her, too, somewhere up in the country.

RITA.

[*Who is sitting on the sofa.*] Perhaps it will be our turn to see her next, Eyolf.

EYOLF.

Auntie, isn't it strange that she should be called the Rat-Wife?

ASTA.

Oh, people just give her that name because she wanders round the country driving away all the rats.

ALLMERS.

I have heard that her real name is Varg.

EYOLF.

Varg! That means a wolf, doesn't it?

ALLMERS.

[*Patting him on the head.*] So you know that, do you?

EYOLF.

[*Cautiously.*] Then perhaps it may be true, after all, that she is a were-wolf at night. Do you believe that, Papa?

ALLMERS.

Oh, no; I don't believe it. Now you ought to go and play a little in the garden.

EYOLF.

Should I not take some books with me?

ALLMERS.

No, no books after this. You had better go down to the beach to the other boys.

EYOLF.

[*Shyly.*] No, Papa, I won't go down to the boys to-day.

ALLMERS.

Why not?

EYOLF.

Oh, because I have these clothes on.

ALLMERS.

[*Knitting his brows.*] Do you mean that they make fun of—of your pretty clothes?

EYOLF.

[*Evasively.*] No, they daren't—for then I would thrash them.

ALLMERS.

Aha!—then why——?

EYOLF.

You see, they are so naughty, these boys. And then they say I can never be a soldier.

ALLMERS.

[*With suppressed indignation.*] Why do they say that, do you think?

EYOLF.

I suppose they are jealous of me. For you know, Papa, they are so poor, they have to go about barefoot.

ALLMERS.

[*Softly, with choking voice.*] Oh, Rita—how it wrings my heart!

RITA.

[*Soothingly, rising.*] There, there, there!

ALLMERS.

[*Threateningly.*] But these rascals shall soon find out who is the master down at the beach!

ASTA.

[*Listening.*] There is some one knocking.

EYOLF.

Oh, I'm sure it's Borgheim!

RITA.

Come in.

[*The* RAT-WIFE *comes softly and noiselessly in by the door on the right. She is a thin little shrunken figure, old and grey-haired, with keen, piercing eyes, dressed in an old-fashioned flowered gown, with a black hood and cloak. She has in her hand a large red umbrella, and carries a black bag by a loop over her arm.*

EYOLF.

[*Softly, taking hold of* ASTA'S *dress.*] Auntie! That must surely be her!

THE RAT-WIFE.

[*Curtseying at the door.*] I humbly beg pardon—but are your worships troubled with any gnawing things in the house?

ALLMERS.

Here? No, I don't think so.

THE RAT-WIFE.

For it would be such a pleasure to me to rid your worships' house of them.

RITA.

Yes, yes; we understand. But we have nothing of the sort here.

THE RAT-WIFE.

That's very unlucky, that is; for I just happened to be on my rounds now, and goodness knows when I may be in these parts again.—Oh, how tired I am!

ALLMERS.

[*Pointing to a chair.*] Yes, you look tired.

THE RAT-WIFE.

I know one ought never to get tired of doing good to the poor little things that are hated and persecuted so cruelly. But it takes your strength out of you, it does.

RITA.

Won't you sit down and rest a little?

THE RAT-WIFE.

I thank your ladyship with all my heart. [*Seats herself on a chair between the door and the sofa.*] I have been out all night at my work.

ALLMERS.

Have you indeed?

THE RAT-WIFE.

Yes, over on the islands. [*With a chuckling laugh.*] The people sent for me, I can assure you. They didn't like it a bit; but there was nothing else to be done. They had to put a good face on it, and bite the sour apple. [*Looks at* EYOLF, *and nods.*] The sour apple, little master, the sour apple.

EYOLF.

[*Involuntarily, a little timidly.*] Why did they have to——?

THE RAT-WIFE.

What?

EYOLF.

To bite it?

THE RAT-WIFE.

Why, because they couldn't keep body and soul together on account of the rats and all the little rat-children, you see, young master.

RITA.

Ugh! Poor people! Have they so many of them?

THE RAT-WIFE.

Yes, it was all alive and swarming with them. [*Laughs with quiet glee.*] They came creepy-crawly up into the beds all night long. They plumped into the milk-cans, and they went pittering and pattering all over the floor, backwards and forwards, and up and down.

EYOLF.

[*Softly, to* ASTA.] I shall never go there, Auntie.

THE RAT-WIFE.

But then I came—I, and another along with me. And we took them with us, every one—the sweet little creatures! We made an end of every one of them.

EYOLF.

[*With a shriek.*] Papa—look! look!

RITA.

Good Heavens, Eyolf!

ALLMERS.

What's the matter?

EYOLF.

[*Pointing.*] There's something wriggling in the bag!

RITA.

[*At the extreme left, shrieks.*] Ugh! Send her away, Alfred.

THE RAT-WIFE.

[*Laughing.*] Oh, dearest lady, you needn't be frightened of such a little mannikin.

ALLMERS.

But what is the thing?

THE RAT-WIFE.

Why, it's only little Mopsëman. [*Loosening the string of the bag.*] Come up out of the dark, my own little darling friend.

[*A little dog with a broad black snout pokes its head out of the bag.*

THE RAT-WIFE.

[*Nodding and beckoning to* EYOLF.] Come along, don't be afraid, my little wounded warrior! He won't bite. Come here! Come here!

EYOLF.

[*Clinging to* ASTA.] No, I dare not.

THE RAT-WIFE.

Don't you think he has a gentle, lovable countenance, my young master?

EYOLF.

[*Astonished, pointing.*] That thing t h e r e ?

THE RAT-WIFE.

Yes, this thing here.

EYOLF.

[*Almost under his breath, staring fixedly at the dog.*] I think he has the horriblest—countenance I ever saw.

THE RAT-WIFE.

[*Closing the bag.*] Oh, it will come—it will come, right enough.

EYOLF.

[*Involuntarily drawing nearer, at last goes right up to her, and strokes the bag.*] But he is lovely—lovely all the same.

THE RAT-WIFE.

[*In a tone of caution.*] But now he is so tired and weary, poor thing. He's utterly tired out, he is. [*Looks at* ALLMERS.] For it takes the strength out of you, that sort of game, I can tell you, sir.

ALLMERS.

What sort of game do you mean?

THE RAT-WIFE.

The luring game.

ALLMERS.

Do you mean that it is the dog that lures the rats?

THE RAT-WIFE.

[*Nodding.*] Mopsëman and I—we two do it together. And it goes so smoothly—for all you can see, at any rate. I just slip a string through his collar, and then I lead him three times round the house, and play on my Pan's-pipes. When they hear that, they have got to come up from the cellars, and down from the garrets, and out of their holes, all the blessed little creatures.

EYOLF.

And does he bite them to death then?

THE RAT-WIFE.

Oh, not at all! No, we go down to the boat, he and I do—and then they follow after us, both the big ones and the little ratikins.

EYOLF.

[*Eagerly.*] And what then—tell me!

THE RAT-WIFE.

Then we push out from the land, and I scull with one oar, and play on my Pan's-pipes. And Mopsëman, he swims behind. [*With glittering eyes.*] And all the creepers and crawlers, they follow and follow us out into the deep, deep waters. Ay, for they h a v e to.

EYOLF.

Why do they h a v e to?

THE RAT-WIFE.

Just because they want not to—just because they are so deadly afraid of the water. That is why they have got to plunge into it.

EYOLF.

Are they drowned, then?

THE RAT-WIFE.

Every blessed one. [*More softly.*] And there it is all as still, and soft, and dark as their hearts can desire, the lovely little things. Down there they sleep a long, sweet sleep, with no one to hate them or persecute them any more. [*Rises.*] In the old days, I can tell you, I didn't need any Mopsëman. Then I did the luring myself—I alone

EYOLF.

And what did you lure then?

THE RAT-WIFE.

Men. One most of all.

EYOLF.

[*With eagerness.*] Oh, who was that one? Tell me!

THE RAT-WIFE.

[*Laughing.*] It was my own sweetheart, it was, little heart-breaker!

EYOLF.

And where is he now, then?

THE RAT-WIFE.

[*Harshly.*] Down where all the rats are. [*Resuming her milder tone.*] But now I must be off and get to business again. Always on the move. [*To* RITA.] So your ladyship has no sort of use for me to-day? I could finish it all off while I am about it.

RITA.

No, thank you; I don't think we require anything.

THE RAT-WIFE.

Well, well, your sweet ladyship, you can never tell. If your ladyship should find that there is anything here that keeps nibbling and gnawing, and creeping and crawling, then just see and get hold of me and Mopsëman.—Good-bye, good-bye, a kind good-bye to you all.

[*She goes out by the door on the right.*

EYOLF.

[*Softly and triumphantly, to* ASTA.] Only think, Auntie, now I have seen the Rat-Wife too!

[RITA *goes out upon the verandah, and fans herself with her pocket-handkerchief. Shortly afterwards,* EYOLF *slips cautiously and unnoticed out to the right.*

ALLMERS.

[*Takes up the portfolio from the table by the sofa.*] Is this your portfolio, Asta?

ASTA.

Yes. I have some of the old letters in it.

ALLMERS.

Ah, the family letters——

ASTA.

You know you asked me to arrange them for you while you were away.

ALLMERS.

[*Pats her on the head.*] And you have actually found time to do that, dear?

ASTA.

Oh, yes. I have done it partly out here and partly at my own rooms in town.

ALLMERS.

Thanks, dear. Did you find anything particular in them?

ASTA.

[*Lightly.*] Oh, you know you always find something or other in such old papers. [*Speaking lower and seriously.*] It is the letters to mother that are in this portfolio.

ALLMERS.

Those, of course, you must keep yourself.

ASTA.

[*With an effort.*] No; I am determined that you shall look through them, too, Alfred. Some time—later on in life. I haven't the key of the portfolio with me just now.

ALLMERS.

It doesn't matter, my dear Asta, for I shall never read your mother's letters in any case.

ASTA.

[*Fixing her eyes on him.*] Then some time or other—some quiet evening—I will tell you a little of what is in them.

ALLMERS.

Yes, that will be much better. But do you keep your mother's letters—you haven't so many mementos of her.

[*He hands* ASTA *the portfolio. She takes it, and lays it on the chair under her outdoor things.* RITA *comes into the room again.*

RITA.

Ugh! I feel as if that horrible old woman had brought a sort of graveyard smell with her.

ALLMERS.

Yes, she was rather horrible.

RITA.

I felt almost sick while she was in the room.

ALLMERS.

However, I can very well understand the sort of spell-bound fascination that she talked about. The loneliness of the mountain-peaks and of the great waste places has something of the same magic about it.

ASTA.

[*Looks attentively at him.*] What is it that has happened to you, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

[*Smiling.*] To me?

ASTA.

Yes, something has happened—something seems almost to have transformed you. Rita noticed it too.

RITA.

Yes, I saw it the moment you came. A change for the better, I hope, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

It o u g h t to be for the better. And it must and shall come to good.

RITA.

[*With an outburst.*] You have had some adventure on your journey! Don't deny it! I can see it in your face!

ALLMERS.

[*Shaking his head.*] No adventure in the world—outwardly at least. But——

RITA.

[*Eagerly.*] But——?

ALLMERS.

It is true that within me there has been something of a revolution.

RITA.

Oh Heavens——!

ALLMERS.

[*Soothingly, patting her hand.*] Only for the better, my dear Rita. You may be perfectly certain of that.

RITA.

[*Seats herself on the sofa.*] You must tell us all about it, at once—tell us everything!

ALLMERS.

[*Turning to* ASTA.] Yes, let us sit down, too, Asta. Then I will try to tell you as well as I can.

[*He seats himself on the sofa at* RITA'S *side.* ASTA *moves a chair forward, and places herself near him.*

RITA.

[*Looking at him expectantly.*] Well——?

ALLMERS.

[*Gazing straight before him.*] When I look back over my life—and my fortunes—for the last ten or eleven years, it seems to me almost like a fairy-tale or a dream. Don't you think so too, Asta?

ASTA.

Yes, in many ways I think so.

ALLMERS.

[*Continuing.*] When I remember what we two used to be, Asta—we two poor orphan children——

RITA.

[*Impatiently.*] Oh, that is such an old, old story.

ALLMERS.

[*Not listening to her.*] And now here I am in comfort and luxury. I have been able to follow my vocation. I have been able to work and study—just as I had always longed to. [*Holds out his hands.*] And all this great—this fabulous good fortune we owe to you, my dearest Rita.

RITA.

[*Half playfully, half angrily, slaps his hand.*] Oh, I do wish you would stop talking like that.

ALLMERS.

I speak of it only as a sort of introduction.

RITA

Then do skip the introduction!

ALLMERS.

Rita,—you must not think it was the doctor's advice that drove me up to the mountains.

ASTA.

Was it not, Alfred?

RITA.

What was it, then?

ALLMERS.

It was this: I found there was no more peace for me, there in my study.

RITA.

No peace! Why, who disturbed you?

ALLMERS.

[*Shaking his head.*] No one from without. But I felt as though I were positively abusing—or, say rather, wasting—my best powers—frittering away the time.

ASTA.

[*With wide eyes.*] When you were writing at your book?

ALLMERS.

[*Nodding.*] For I cannot think that my powers are confined to that alone. I must surely have it in me to do one or two other things as well.

RITA.

Was that what you sat there brooding over?

ALLMERS.

Yes, mainly that.

RITA.

And so that is what has made you so discontented with yourself of late; and with the rest of us as well. For you know you were discontented, Alfred.

ALLMERS.

[*Gazing straight before him.*] There I sat bent over my table, day after day, and often half the night too—writing and writing at the great thick book on "Human Responsibility." H'm!

ASTA.

[*Laying her hand upon his arm.*] But, Alfred—that book is to be your life-work.

RITA.

Yes, you have said so often enough.

ALLMERS.

I thought so. Ever since I grew up, I have thought so. [*With an affectionate expression in his eyes.*] And it was you that enabled me to devote myself to it, my dear Rita——

RITA.

Oh, nonsense!

ALLMERS.

[*Smiling to her.*]—you, with your gold, and your green forests——

RITA.

[*Half laughing, half vexed.*] If you begin all that rubbish again, I shall beat you.

ASTA.

[*Looking sorrowfully at him.*] But the book, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

It began, as it were, to drift away from me. But I was more and more beset by the thought of the higher duties that laid their claims upon me.

RITA.

[*Beaming, seizes his hand.*] Alfred!

ALLMERS.

The thought of Eyolf, my dear Rita.

RITA.

[*Disappointed, drops his hand.*] Ah—of Eyolf!

ALLMERS.

Poor little Eyolf has taken deeper and deeper hold of me. After that unlucky fall from the table—and especially since we have been assured that the injury is incurable——

RITA.

[*Insistently.*] But you take all the care you possibly can of him, Alfred!

ALLMERS.

As a schoolmaster, yes; but not as a father. And it is a father that I want henceforth to be to Eyolf.

RITA.

[*Looking at him and shaking her head.*] I don't think I quite understand you.

ALLMERS.

I mean that I will try with all my might to make his misfortune as painless and easy to him as it can possibly be.

RITA.

Oh, but, dear—thank Heaven, I don't think he feels it so deeply.

ASTA.

[*With emotion.*] Yes, Rita, he does.

ALLMERS.

Yes, you may be sure he feels it deeply.

RITA.

[*Impatiently.*] But, Alfred, what more can you do for him?

ALLMERS.

I will try to perfect all the rich possibilities that are dawning in his childish soul. I will foster all the germs of good in his nature—make them blossom and bear fruit. [*With more and more warmth, rising.*] And I will do more than that! I will help him to bring his desires into harmony with what lies attainable before him. That is just what at present they are not. All his longings are for things that must for ever remain unattainable to him. But I will create a conscious happiness in his mind.

[*He goes once or twice up and down the room.* ASTA *and* RITA *follow him with their eyes.*

RITA.

You should take these things more quietly, Alfred!

ALLMERS.

[*Stops beside the table on the left, and looks at them.*] Eyolf shall carry on my life-work—if he wants to. Or

he shall choose one that is altogether his own. Perhaps that would be best. At all events, I shall let mine rest as it is.

RITA.

[*Rising.*] But, Alfred dear, can you not work both for yourself and for Eyolf?

ALLMERS.

No, I cannot. It is impossible! I cannot divide myself in this matter—and therefore I efface myself. Eyolf shall be the complete man of our race. And it shall be my new life-work to make him the complete man.

ASTA.

[*Has risen and now goes up to him.*] This must have cost you a terribly hard struggle, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

Yes, it has. At home here, I should never have conquered myself, never brought myself to the point of renunciation. Never at home!

RITA.

Then that was why you went away this summer?

ALLMERS.

[*With shining eyes.*] Yes! I went up into the infinite solitudes. I saw the sunrise gleaming on the mountain peaks. I felt myself nearer the stars—I seemed almost to be in sympathy and communion with them. And then I found the strength for it.

ASTA.

[*Looking sadly at him.*] But you will never write any more of your book on "Human Responsibility"?

ALLMERS.

No, never, Asta. I tell you I cannot split up my life between two vocations. But I will act out my "human responsibility"—in my own life.

RITA.

[*With a smile.*] Do you think you can live up to such high resolves at home here?

ALLMERS.

[*Taking her hand.*] With you to help me, I can. [*Holds out the other hand.*] And with you too, Asta.

RITA.

[*Drawing her hand away.*] Ah—with both of us! So, after all, you c a n divide yourself.

ALLMERS.

Why, my dearest Rita——!

[RITA *moves away from him and stands in the garden doorway. A light and rapid knock is heard at the door on the right.* Engineer BORGHEIM *enters quickly. He is a young man of a little over thirty. His expression is bright and cheerful, and he holds himself erect.*

BORGHEIM.

Good morning, Mrs. Allmers. [*Stops with an expression of pleasure on seeing* ALLMERS.] Why, what's this? Home again already, Mr. Allmers?

ALLMERS.

[*Shaking hands with him.*] Yes, I arrived last night.

RITA.

[*Gaily.*] His leave was up, Mr. Borgheim.

ALLMERS.

No, you know it wasn't, Rita——

RITA.

[*Approaching.*] Oh yes, but it was, though. His furlough had run out.

BORGHEIM.

I see you hold your husband well in hand, Mrs. Allmers.

RITA.

I hold to my rights. And besides, everything must have an end.

BORGHEIM.

Oh, not everything—I hope. Good morning, Miss Allmers!

ASTA.

[*Holding aloof from him.*] Good morning.

RITA.

[*Looking at* BORGHEIM.] Not everything, you say?

BORGHEIM.

Oh, I am firmly convinced that there are s o m e things in the world that will never come to an end.

RITA.

I suppose you are thinking of love—and that sort of thing.

BORGHEIM.

[*Warmly.*] I am thinking of all that is lovely!

RITA.

And that never comes to an end. Yes, let us think of that, hope for that, all of us.

ALLMERS.

[*Coming up to them.*] I suppose you will soon have finished your road-work out here?

BORGHEIM.

I have finished it already—finished it yesterday. It has been a long business, but, thank Heaven, t h a t has come to an end.

RITA.

And you are beaming with joy over that?

BORGHEIM.

Yes, I am indeed!

RITA.

Well, I must say——

BORGHEIM.

What, Mrs. Allmers?

RITA.

I don't think it is particularly nice of you, Mr. Borgheim.

BORGHEIM.

Indeed! Why not?

RITA.

Well, I suppose we sha'n't often see you in these parts after this.

BORGHEIM.

No, that is true. I hadn't thought of that.

RITA.

Oh well, I suppose you will be able to look in upon us now and then all the same.

BORGHEIM.

No, unfortunately that will be out of my power for a very long time.

ALLMERS.

Indeed! How so?

BORGHEIM.

The fact is, I have got a big piece of new work that I must set about at once.

ALLMERS.

Have you indeed?—[*Pressing his hand.*]—I am heartily glad to hear it.

RITA.

I congratulate you, Mr. Borgheim.

BORGHEIM.

Hush, hush—I really ought not to talk openly of it as yet! But I can't help coming out with it! It is a great piece of road-making—up in the north—with mountain ranges to cross, and the most tremendous difficulties to overcome!—[*With an outburst of gladness.*]—Oh, what a glorious world this is—and what a joy it is to be a road-maker in it!

RITA.

[*Smiling, and looking teasingly at him.*] Is it road-making business that has brought you out here to-day in such wild spirits?

BORGHEIM.

No, not that alone. I am thinking of all the bright and hopeful prospects that are opening out before me.

RITA.

Aha, then perhaps you have something still more exquisite in reserve!

BORGHEIM.

[*Glancing towards* ASTA.] Who knows! When once happiness comes to us, it is apt to come like a spring flood. [*Turns to* ASTA.] Miss Allmers, would you not like to take a little walk with me? As we used to?

ASTA.

[*Quickly.*] No—no, thank you. Not now. Not to-day.

BORGHEIM.

Oh, do come! Only a little bit of a walk! I have so much I want to talk to you about before I go.

RITA.

Something else, perhaps, that you must not talk openly about as yet?

BORGHEIM.

H'm, that depends——

RITA.

But there is nothing to prevent your whispering, you know. [*Half aside.*] Asta, you must really go with him.

ASTA.

But, my dear Rita——

BORGHEIM.

[*Imploringly.*] Miss Asta—remember it is to be a farewell walk—the last for many a day.

ASTA.

[*Takes her hat and parasol.*] Very well, suppose we take a stroll in the garden, then.

BORGHEIM.

Oh, thank you, thank you!

ALLMERS.

And while you are there you can see what Eyolf is doing.

BORGHEIM.

Ah, Eyolf, by the bye! Where is Eyolf to-day? I've got something for him.

ALLMERS.

He is out playing somewhere.

BORGHEIM.

Is he really! Then he has begun to play now? He used always to be sitting indoors over his books.

ALLMERS.

There is to be an end of that now. I am going to make a regular open-air boy of him.

BORGHEIM.

Ah, now, that's right! Out into the open air with him, poor little fellow! Good Lord, what can we possibly do better than play in this blessed world? For my part, I think all life is one long playtime!—Come, Miss Asta!

[BORGHEIM *and* ASTA *go out on the verandah and down through the garden.*

ALLMERS.

[*Stands looking after them.*] Rita—do you think there is anything between those two?

RITA.

I don't know what to say. I used to think there was. But Asta has grown so strange to me—so utterly incomprehensible of late.

ALLMERS.

Indeed! Has she? While I have been away?

RITA.

Yes, within the last week or two.

ALLMERS.

And you think she doesn't care very much about him now?

RITA.

Not seriously; not utterly and entirely; not unreservedly—I am sure she doesn't. [*Looks searchingly at him.*] Would it displease you if she did?

ALLMERS.

It would not exactly displease me. But it would certainly be a disquieting thought——

RITA.

Disquieting?

ALLMERS.

Yes; you must remember that I am responsible for Asta—for her life's happiness.

RITA.

Oh, come—responsible! Surely Asta has come to years of discretion? I should say she was capable of choosing for herself.

ALLMERS.

Yes, we must hope so, Rita.

RITA.

For my part, I don't think at all ill of Borgheim.

ALLMERS.

No, dear—no more do I—quite the contrary. But all the same——

RITA.

[*Continuing.*] And I should be very glad indeed if he and Asta were to make a match of it.

ALLMERS.

[*Annoyed.*] Oh, why should you be?

RITA.

[*With increasing excitement.*] Why, for then she would have to go far, far away with him! And she could never come out here to us, as she does now.

ALLMERS.

[*Stares at her in astonishment.*] What! Can you really wish Asta to go away?

RITA.

Yes, yes, Alfred!

ALLMERS.

Why in all the world——?

RITA.

[*Throwing her arms passionately round his neck.*] For then, at last, I should have you to myself alone! And yet—not even then! Not wholly to myself! [*Bursts into convulsive weeping.*] Oh, Alfred, Alfred—I cannot give you up!

ALLMERS.

[*Gently releasing himself.*] My dearest Rita, do be reasonable!

RITA.

I don't care a bit about being reasonable! I care only for you! Only for you in all the world! [*Again throwing her arms round his neck.*] For you, for you, for you!

ALLMERS.

Let me go, let me go—you are strangling me!

RITA.

[*Letting him go.*] How I wish I could! [*Looking at him with flashing eyes.*] Oh, if you knew how I have hated you——!

ALLMERS.

Hated me——!

RITA.

Yes—when you shut yourself up in your room and brooded over your work—till long, long into the night. [*Plaintively.*] So long, so late, Alfred. Oh, how I hated your work!

ALLMERS.

But now I have done with that.

RITA.

[*With a cutting laugh.*] Oh yes! Now you have given yourself up to something worse.

ALLMERS.

[*Shocked.*] Worse! Do you call our child something worse?

RITA.

[*Vehemently.*] Yes, I do. As he comes between you and me, I call him so. For the book—the book was not a living being, as the child is. [*With increasing impetuosity.*] But I won't endure it, Alfred! I will not endure it—I tell you so plainly!

ALLMERS.

[*Looks steadily at her, and says in a low voice.*] I am often almost afraid of you, Rita.

RITA.

[*Gloomily.*] I am often afraid of myself. And for that very reason you must not awake the evil in me.

ALLMERS.

Why, good Heavens, do I do that?

RITA.

Yes, you do—when you tear to shreds the holiest bonds between us

ALLMERS.

[*Urgently.*] Think what you're saying, Rita. It is your own child—our only child, that you are speaking of.

RITA.

The child is only half mine. [*With another outburst.*] But you shall be mine alone! You shall be wholly mine! That I have a right to demand of you!

ALLMERS.

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Oh, my dear Rita, it is of no use demanding anything. Everything must be freely given.

RITA.

[*Looks anxiously at him.*] And that you cannot do henceforth?

ALLMERS.

No, I cannot. I must divide myself between Eyolf and you.

RITA.

But if Eyolf had never been born? What then?

ALLMERS.

[*Evasively.*] Oh, that would be another matter. Then I should have only you to care for.

RITA.

[*Softly, her voice quivering.*] Then I wish he had never been born.

ALLMERS.

[*Flashing out.*] Rita! You don't know what you are saying!

RITA.

[*Trembling with emotion.*] It was in pain unspeakable that I brought him into the world. But I bore it all with joy and rapture for your sake.

ALLMERS.

[*Warmly.*] Oh, yes, I know, I know.

RITA.

[*With decision.*] But there it must end. I will live my life—together with you—wholly with you. I cannot go on being only Eyolf's mother—only his mother and nothing more. I will not, I tell you! I cannot! I will be all in all to you! To you, Alfred!

ALLMERS.

But that is just what you are, Rita. Through our child——

RITA.

Oh—vapid, nauseous phrases—nothing else! No, Alfred, I am not to be put off like that. I was fitted to become the child's mother, but not to be a mother to him. You must take me as I am, Alfred.

ALLMERS.

And yet you used to be so fond of Eyolf.

RITA.

I was so sorry for him—because you troubled yourself so little about him. You kept him reading and grinding at books. You scarcely even saw him.

ALLMERS.

[*Nodding slowly.*] No; I was blind. The time had not yet come for me——

RITA.

[*Looking in his face*] But now, I suppose, it has come?

ALLMERS.

Yes, at last. Now I see that the highest task I can have in the world is to be a true father to Eyolf.

RITA.

And to me?—what will you be to me?

ALLMERS.

[*Gently.*] I will always go on caring for you—with calm, deep tenderness. [*He tries to take her hands.*]

RITA.

[*Evading him.*] I don't care a bit for your calm, deep tenderness. I want you utterly and entirely—and alone! Just as I had you in the first rich, beautiful days. [*Vehemently and harshly.*] Never, never will I consent to be put off with scraps and leavings, Alfred!

ALLMERS.

[*In a conciliatory tone.*] I should have thought there was happiness in plenty for all three of us, Rita.

RITA.

[*Scornfully.*] Then you are easy to please. [*Seats herself at the table on the left.*] Now listen to me.

ALLMERS.

[*Approaching.*] Well, what is it?

RITA.

[*Looking up at him with a veiled glow in her eyes.*] When I got your telegram yesterday evening——

ALLMERS.

Yes? What then?

RITA.

—then I dressed myself in white——

ALLMERS.

Yes, I noticed you were in white when I arrived.

RITA.

I had let down my hair——

ALLMERS.

Your sweet masses of hair——

RITA.

—so that it flowed down my neck and shoulders——

ALLMERS.

I saw it, I saw it. Oh, how lovely you were, Rita!

RITA.

There were rose-tinted shades over both the lamps. And we were alone, we two—the only waking beings in the whole house. And there was champagne on the table.

ALLMERS.

I did not drink any of it.

RITA.

[*Looking bitterly at him.*] No, that is true. [*Laughs harshly.*] "There stood the champagne, but you tasted it not"—as the poet says.

[*She rises from the arm-chair, goes with an air of weariness over to the sofa, and seats herself, half reclining, upon it.*

ALLMERS.

[*Crosses the room and stands before her.*] I was so taken up with serious thoughts. I had made up my mind to

talk to you of our future, Rita—and first and foremost of Eyolf.

RITA.

[*Smiling.*] And so you did——

ALLMERS.

No, I had not time to—for you began to undress.

RITA.

Yes, and meanwhile you talked about Eyolf. Don't you remember? You wanted to know all about little Eyolf's digestion.

ALLMERS.

[*Looking reproachfully at her.*] Rita!

RITA.

And then you got into your bed, and slept the sleep of the just.

ALLMERS.

[*Shaking his head.*] Rita—Rita!

RITA.

[*Lying at full length and looking up at him.*] Alfred?

ALLMERS.

Yes?

RITA.

"There stood your champagne, but you tasted it not."

ALLMERS.

[*Almost harshly.*] No. I did not taste it.

[*He goes away from her and stands in the garden doorway.* RITA *lies for some time motionless, with closed eyes.*

RITA.

[*Suddenly springing up.*] But let me tell you one thing, Alfred.

ALLMERS.

[*Turning in the doorway.*] Well?

RITA.

You ought not to feel quite so secure as you do!

ALLMERS.

Not secure?

RITA.

No, you ought not to be so indifferent! Not so certain of your property in me!

ALLMERS.

[*Drawing nearer.*] What do you mean by that?

RITA.

[*With trembling lips.*] Never in a single thought have I been untrue to you, Alfred! Never for an instant.

ALLMERS.

No, Rita, I know that—I, who know you so well.

RITA.

[*With sparkling eyes.*] But if you disdain me——!

ALLMERS.

Disdain! I don't understand what you mean!

RITA.

Oh, you don't know all that might rise up within me, if——

ALLMERS.

If?

RITA.

If I should ever see that you did not care for me—that you did not love me as you used to.

ALLMERS.

But, my dearest Rita—years bring a certain change with them—and that must one day occur even in us—as in every one else.

RITA.

Never in me! And I will not hear of any change in you either—I could not bear it, Alfred. I want to keep you to myself alone.

ALLMERS.

[*Looking at her with concern.*] You have a terribly jealous nature——

RITA.

I can't make myself different from what I am. [*Threateningly.*] If you go and divide yourself between me and any one else——

ALLMERS.

What then——?

RITA.

Then I will take my revenge on you, Alfred!

ALLMERS.

How "take your revenge"?

RITA.

I don't know how.—Oh yes, I do know, well enough!

ALLMERS.

Well?

RITA.

I will go and throw myself away——

ALLMERS.

Throw yourself away, do you say?

RITA.

Yes, that I will. I'll throw myself straight into the arms of—of the first man that comes in my way!

ALLMERS.

[*Looking tenderly at her and shaking his head.*] That you will never do—my loyal, proud, true-hearted Rita!

RITA.

[*Putting her arms round his neck.*] Oh, you don't know what I might come to be if you—if you did not love me any more.

ALLMERS.

Did not love you, Rita? How can you say such a thing!

RITA.

[*Half laughing, lets him go.*] Why should I not spread my nets for that—that road-maker man that hangs about here?

ALLMERS.

[*Relieved.*] Oh, thank goodness—you are only joking.

RITA.

Not at all. He would do as well as any one else.

ALLMERS.

Ah, but I suspect he is more or less taken up already.

RITA.

So much the better! For then I should take him away from some one else; and that is just what Eyolf has done to me.

ALLMERS.

Can you say that our little Eyolf has done that?

RITA.

[*Pointing with her forefinger.*] There, you see! You see! The moment you mention Eyolf's name, you grow tender and your voice quivers! [*Threateningly, clenching her hands.*] Oh, you almost tempt me to wish——

ALLMERS.

[*Looking at her anxiously.*] What do I tempt you to wish, Rita?——

RITA.

[*Vehemently, going away from him.*] No, no, no—I won't tell you that! Never!

ALLMERS.

[*Drawing nearer to her.*] Rita! I implore you—for my sake and for your own—do not let yourself be tempted into evil.

[BORGHEIM *and* ASTA *come up from the garden. They both show signs of restrained emotion. They look serious and dejected.* ASTA *remains out on the verandah.* BORGHEIM *comes into the room.*

BORGHEIM.

So that is over—Miss Allmers and I have had our last walk together.

RITA.

[*Looks at him with surprise.*] Ah! And there is no longer journey to follow the walk?

BORGHEIM.

Yes, for me.

RITA.

For you alone?

BORGHEIM.

Yes, for me alone.

RITA.

[*Glances darkly at* ALLMERS.] Do you hear that? [*Turns to* BORGHEIM.] I'll wager it is some one with the evil eye that has played you this trick.

BORGHEIM.

[*Looks at her.*] The evil eye?

RITA.

[*Nodding.*] Yes, the evil eye.

BORGHEIM.

Do you believe in the evil eye, Mrs. Allmers?

RITA.

Yes. I have begun to be ieve in the evil eye. Especially in a child's evil eye.

ALLMERS.

[*Shocked, whispers.*] Rita—how can you——?

RITA.

[*Speaking low.*] It is you that make me so wicked and hateful, Alfred.

[*Confused cries and shrieks are heard in the distance, from the direction of the fiord.*

BORGHEIM.

[*Going to the glass door.*] What noise is that?

ASTA.

[*In the doorway.*] Look at all those people running down to the pier!

ALLMERS.

What can it be? [*Looks out for a moment.*] No doubt it's those street urchins at some mischief again.

BORGHEIM.

[*Calls, leaning over the verandah railings.*] I say, you boys down there! What's the matter?

[*Several voices are heard answering indistinctly and confusedly.*

RITA.

What do they say?

BORGHEIM.

They say it's a child that's drowned.

ALLMERS.

A child drowned?

ASTA.

[*Uneasily.*] A little boy, they say.

ALLMERS.

Oh, they can all swim, every one of them.

RITA.

[*Shrieks in terror.*] Where is Eyolf?

ALLMERS.

Keep quiet—quiet. Eyolf is down in the garden, playing.

ASTA.

No, he wasn't in the garden.—

RITA.

[*With upstretched arms.*] Oh, if only it isn't he!

BORGHEIM.

[*Listens, and calls down.*] Whose child is it, do you say? [*Indistinct voices are heard.* BORGHEIM *and* ASTA *utter a suppressed cry, and rush out through the garden.*

ALLMERS.

[*In an agony of dread.*] It isn't Eyolf! It isn't Eyolf, Rita!

RITA.

[*On the verandah, listening.*] Hush! Be quiet! Let me hear what they are saying!

[RITA *rushes back with a piercing shriek, into the room.*

ALLMERS.

[*Following her.*] What did they say?

RITA.

[*Sinking down beside the arm-chair on the left.*] They said: "The crutch is floating!"

ALLMERS.

[*Almost paralysed.*] No! No! No!

RITA.

[*Hoarsely.*] Eyolf! Eyolf! Oh, but they must save him!

ALLMERS.

[*Half distracted.*] They must, they must! So precious a life! [*He rushes down through the garden.*

ACT SECOND

A little narrow glen by the side of the fiord, on ALLMERS'S *property. On the left, lofty old trees overarch the spot. Down the slope in the background a brook comes leaping, and loses itself among the stones on the margin of the wood. A path winds along by the brook-side. To the right there are only a few single trees, between which the fiord is visible. In front is seen the corner of a boat-shed with a boat drawn up. Under the old trees on the left stands a table with a bench and one or two chairs, all made of thin birch-staves. It is a heavy, damp day, with driving mist-wreaths.*

ALFRED ALLMERS, *dressed as before, sits on the bench, leaning his arms on the table. His hat lies before him. He gazes absently and immovably out over the water.*

Presently ASTA ALLMERS *comes down the wood-path. She is carrying an open umbrella.*

ASTA.

[*Goes quietly and cautiously up to him.*] You ought not to sit down here in this gloomy weather, Alfred.

ALLMERS.

[*Nods slowly without answering.*]

ASTA.

[*Closing her umbrella.*] I have been searching for you such a long time.

ALLMERS.

[*Without expression.*] Thank you.

ASTA.

[*Moves a chair and seats herself close to him.*] Have you been sitting here long? All the time?

ALLMERS.

[*Does not answer at first. Presently he says:*] No I cannot grasp it. It seems so utterly impossible.

ASTA.

[*Laying her hand compassionately on his arm.*] Poor Alfred!

ALLMERS.

[*Gazing at her.*] Is it really true then, Asta? Or have I gone mad? Or am I only dreaming? Oh, if it were only a dream! Just think, if I were to waken now!

ASTA.

Oh, if I could only waken you!

ALLMERS.

[*Looking out over the water.*] How pitiless the fiord looks to-day, lying so heavy and drowsy—leaden-grey—with splashes of yellow—and reflecting the rain-clouds.

ASTA.

[*Imploringly.*] Oh, Alfred, don't sit staring out over the fiord!

ALLMERS.

[*Not heeding her.*] Over the surface, yes. But in the depths—there sweeps the rushing undertow——

ASTA.

[*In terror.*] Oh, for God's sake—don't think of the depths!

ALLMERS.

[*Looking gently at her.*] I suppose you think he is lying close outside here? But he is not, Asta. You must not think that. You must remember how fiercely the current sweeps out here—straight to the open sea.

ASTA.

[*Throws herself forward against the table, and, sobbing, buries her face in her hands.*] Oh, God! Oh, God!

ALLMERS.

[*Heavily.*] So you see, little Eyolf has passed so far —far away from us now.

ASTA.

[*Looks imploringly up at him.*] Oh, Alfred, don't say such things!

ALLMERS.

Why, you can reckon it out for yourself—you that are so clever. In eight-and-twenty hours—nine-and-twenty hours—— Let me see——! Let me see——!

ASTA.

[*Shrieking and stopping her ears.*] Alfred!

ALLMERS.

[*Clenching his hand firmly upon the table.*] Can you conceive the meaning of a thing like this?

ASTA.

[*Looks at him.*] Of what?

ALLMERS.

Of this that has been done to Rita and me.

ASTA.

The meaning of it?

ALLMERS.

[*Impatiently.*] Yes, the meaning, I say. For, after all, there must be a meaning in it. Life, existence—destiny, c a n n o t be so utterly meaningless.

ASTA.

Oh, who can say anything with certainty about these things, my dear Alfred?

ALLMERS.

[*Laughs bitterly.*] No, no; I believe you are right there. Perhaps the whole thing goes simply by haphazard—taking its own course, like a drifting wreck without a rudder. I daresay that is how it is. At least, it seems very like it.

ASTA.

[*Thoughtfully.*] What if it only seems——?

ALLMERS.

[*Vehemently.*] Ah? Perhaps you can unravel the mystery for me? I certainly cannot. [*More gently.*] Here is Eyolf, just entering upon conscious life: full of such infinite possibilities—splendid possibilities perhaps: he would have filled my life with pride and gladness. And then a crazy old woman has only to come this way —and show a cur in a bag——

ASTA.

But we don't in the least know how it really happened.

ALLMERS.

Yes, we do. The boys saw her row out over the fiord. They saw Eyolf standing alone at the very end of the pier. They saw him gazing after her—and then he seemed to turn giddy. [*Quivering.*] And that was how he fell over—and disappeared.

ASTA.

Yes, yes. But all the same——

ALLMERS.

She has drawn him down into the depths—that you may be sure of, dear.

ASTA.

But, Alfred, why should she?

ALLMERS.

Yes, that is just the question! Why should she? There is no retribution behind it all—no atonement, I

mean. Eyolf never did her any harm. He never called names after her; he never threw stones at her dog. Why, he had never set eyes either on her or her dog till yesterday. So there is no retribution; the whole thing is utterly groundless and meaningless, Asta.—And yet the order of the world requires it.

ASTA.

Have you spoken to Rita of these things?

ALLMERS.

[*Shakes his head.*] I feel as if I can talk better to you about them. [*Drawing a deep breath.*] And about everything else as well.

[ASTA *takes sewing-materials and a little paper parcel out of her pocket.* ALLMERS *sits looking on absently.*

ALLMERS.

What have you got there, Asta?

ASTA.

[*Taking his hat.*] Some black crape.

ALLMERS.

Oh, what is the use of that?

ASTA.

Rita asked me to put it on. May I?

ALLMERS.

Oh, yes; as far as I'm concerned—— [*She sews the crape on his hat.*]

ALLMERS.

[*Sitting and looking at her.*] Where is Rita?

ASTA.

She is walking about the garden a little, I think. Borgheim is with her.

ALLMERS.

[*Slightly surprised.*] Indeed! Is Borgheim out here to-day again?

ASTA.

Yes. He came out by the mid-day train.

ALLMERS.

I didn't expect that.

ASTA.

[*Sewing.*] He was so fond of Eyolf.

ALLMERS.

Borgheim is a faithful soul, Asta.

ASTA.

[*With quiet warmth.*] Yes, faithful he is, indeed. That is certain.

ALLMERS.

[*Fixing his eyes upon her.*] You are really fond of him?

ASTA.

Yes, I am.

ALLMERS.

And yet you cannot make up your mind to——?

ASTA.

[*Interrupting.*] Oh, my dear Alfred, don't talk of that!

ALLMERS.

Yes, yes; tell me why you cannot?

ASTA.

Oh, no! Please! You really must not ask me. You see, it's so painful for me.—There now! The hat is done.

ALLMERS.

Thank you.

ASTA.

And now for the left arm.

ALLMERS.

Am I to have crape on it too?

ASTA.

Yes, that is the custom.

ALLMERS.

Well—as you please.

[*She moves close up to him and begins to sew.*

ASTA.

Keep your arm still—then I won't prick you.

ALLMERS.

[*With a half-smile.*] This is like the old days.

ASTA.

Yes, don't you think so?

ALLMERS.

When you were a little girl you used to sit just like this, mending my clothes. The first thing you ever sewed for me—that was black crape, too.

ASTA.

Was it?

ALLMERS.

Round my student's cap—at the time of father's death.

ASTA.

Could I sew then? Fancy, I have forgotten it.

ALLMERS.

Oh, you were such a little thing then.

ASTA.

Yes, I was little then.

ALLMERS.

And then, two years afterwards—when we lost your mother—then again you sewed a big crape band on my sleeve.

ASTA.

I thought it was the right thing to do.

ALLMERS.

[*Patting her hand.*] Yes, yes, it was the right thing to do, Asta. And then when we were left alone in the world, we two——. Are you done already?

ASTA.

Yes. [*Putting together her sewing-materials.*] It was really a beautiful time for us, Alfred. We two alone.

ALLMERS.

Yes, it was—though we had to toil so hard.

ASTA.

Y o u toiled.

ALLMERS.

[*With more life.*] Oh, you toiled too, in your way, I can assure you—[*smiling*]—my dear, faithful—Eyolf.

ASTA.

Oh—you mustn't remind me of that stupid nonsense about the name.

ALLMERS.

Well, if you had been a boy, you would have been called Eyolf.

ASTA.

Yes, i f ! But when you began to go to college——. [*Smiling involuntarily.*] I wonder how you could be so childish.

ALLMERS.

Was it I that was childish?

ASTA.

Yes, indeed, I think it was, as I look back upon it all. You were ashamed of having no brother—only a sister.

ALLMERS.

No, no, it was you, dear—y o u were ashamed.

ASTA.

Oh yes, I too, perhaps—a little. And somehow or other I was sorry for you——

ALLMERS.

Yes, I believe you were. And then you hunted up some of my old boy's clothes——

ASTA.

Your fine Sunday clothes—yes. Do you remember the blue blouse and knickerbockers?

ALLMERS.

[*His eyes dwelling upon her.*] I remember so well how you looked when you used to wear them.

ASTA.

Only when we were at home, alone, though.

ALLMERS.

And how serious we were, dear, and how mightily pleased with ourselves. I always called you Eyolf,

ASTA.

Oh, Alfred, I hope you have never told Rita this?

ALLMERS.

Yes, I believe I did once tell her.

ASTA.

Oh, Alfred, how could you do that?

ALLMERS.

Well, you see—one tells one's wife everything—very nearly.

ASTA.

Yes, I suppose one does.

ALLMERS.

[*As if awakening, clutches at his forehead and starts up.*] Oh, how can I sit here and——

ASTA.

[*Rising, looks sorrowfully at him.*] What is the matter?

ALLMERS.

He had almost passed away from me. He had passed quite away.

ASTA.

Eyolf!

ALLMERS.

Here I sat, living in these recollections—and he had no part in them.

ASTA.

Yes, Alfred—little Eyolf was behind it all.

ALLMERS.

No, he was not. He slipped out of my memory—out of my thoughts. I did not see him for a moment as we sat here talking. I utterly forgot him all that time.

ASTA.

But surely you must take some rest in your sorrow.

ALLMERS.

No, no, no; that is just what I will not do! I must not—I have no right—and no heart for it, either. [*Going in great excitement towards the right.*] All my thoughts must be out there, where he lies drifting in the depths!

ASTA.

[*Following him and holding him back.*] Alfred—Alfred! Don't go to the fiord.

ALLMERS.

I must go out to him! Let me go, Asta! I will take the boat.

ASTA.

[*In terror.*] Don't go to the fiord, I say!

ALLMERS.

[*Yielding.*] No, no—I will not. Only let me alone.

ASTA.

[*Leading him back to the table.*] You must rest from your thoughts, Alfred. Come here and sit down.

ALLMERS.

[*Making as if to seat himself on the bench.*] Well, well —as you please.

ASTA.

No, I won't let you sit there.

ALLMERS.

Yes, let me.

ASTA.

No, don't. For then you will only sit looking out—— [*Forces him down upon a chair, with his back to the right.*] There now. Now that's right. [*Seats herself upon the bench.*] And now we can talk a little again.

ALLMERS.

[*Drawing a deep breath audibly.*] It was good to deaden the sorrow and heartache for a moment.

ASTA.

You m u s t do so, Alfred.

ALLMERS.

But don't you think it is terribly weak and unfeeling of me—to be able to do so?

ASTA.

Oh, no—I am sure it is impossible to keep circling for ever round one fixed thought.

ALLMERS.

Yes, for me it is impossible. Before you came to me, here I sat, torturing myself unspeakably with this crushing, gnawing sorrow——

ASTA.

Yes?

ALLMERS.

And would you believe it, Asta——? H'm——

ASTA.

Well?

ALLMERS.

In the midst of all the agony, I found myself speculating what we should have for dinner to-day.

ASTA.

[*Soothingly.*] Well, well, if only it rests you to——

ALLMERS.

Yes, just fancy, dear—it seemed as if it did give me rest. [*Holds out his hand to her across the table.*] How good it is, Asta, that I have you with me. I am so glad of that. Glad, glad—even in my sorrow.

ASTA.

[*Looking earnestly at him.*] You ought most of all to be glad that you have Rita.

ALLMERS.

Yes, of course I should. But Rita is no kin to me—it isn't like having a sister.

ASTA.

[*Eagerly.*] Do you say that, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

Yes, o u r family is a thing apart. [*Half jestingly.*] We have always had vowels for our initials. Don't you remember how often we used to speak of that? And all our relations—all equally poor. And we have all the same colour of eyes.

ASTA.

Do you think I have——?

ALLMERS.

No, you take entirely after your mother. You are not in the least like the rest of us—not even like father. But all the same——

ASTA.

All the same——?

ALLMERS.

Well, I believe that living together has, as it were, stamped us in each other's image—mentally, I mean.

ASTA.

[*With warm emotion.*] Oh, you must never say that, Alfred. It is only I that have taken my stamp from you; and it is to you that I owe everything—every g o o d thing in the world.

ALLMERS.

[*Shaking his head.*] You owe me nothing, Asta. On the contrary——

ASTA.

I owe you everything! You must never doubt that. No sacrifice has been too great for you——

ALLMERS.

[*Interrupting.*] Oh, nonsense—sacrifice! Don't talk of such a thing.—I have only loved you, Asta, ever since you were a little child. [*After a short pause.*] And then it always seemed to me that I had so much injustice to make up to you for.

ASTA.

[*Astonished.*] Injustice? You?

ALLMERS.

Not precisely on my own account. But——

ASTA.

[*Eagerly.*] But——?

ALLMERS.

On father's.

ASTA.

[*Half rising from the bench.*] On—father's! [*Sitting down again.*] What do you mean by that, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

Father was never really kind to you.

ASTA.

[*Vehemently.*] Oh, don't say that!

ALLMERS.

Yes, it is true. He did not love you—not as he ought to have.

ASTA.

[*Evasively.*] No, perhaps not as he loved you. That was only natural.

ALLMERS.

[*Continuing.*] And he was often hard to your mother, too—at least in the last years.

ASTA.

[*Softly.*] Mother was so much, much younger than he—remember that.

ALLMERS.

Do you think they were not quite suited to each other?

ASTA.

Perhaps not.

ALLMERS.

Yes, but still——. Father, who in other ways was so gentle and warm-hearted—so kindly towards every one——

ASTA.

[*Quietly.*] Mother, too, was not always as she ought to have been.

ALLMERS.

Your mother was not!

ASTA.

Perhaps not always.

ALLMERS.

Towards father, do you mean?

ASTA.

Yes.

ALLMERS.

I never noticed that.

ASTA.

[*Struggling with her tears, rises.*] Oh, my dear Alfred —let them rest—those who are gone.

[*She goes towards the right.*

ALLMERS.

[*Rising.*] Yes, let them rest. [*Wringing his hands.*] But those who are gone—it is they that won't let us rest, Asta. Neither day nor night.

ASTA.

[*Looks warmly at him.*] Time will make it all seem easier, Alfred.

ALLMERS.

[*Looking helplessly at her.*] Yes, don't you think it will?—But how I am to get over these terrible first days [*Hoarsely.*]—that is what I cannot imagine.

ASTA.

[*Imploringly, laying her hands on his shoulders.*] Go up to Rita. Oh, please do——

ALLMERS.

[*Vehemently, withdrawing from her.*] No, no, no—don't talk to me of that! I cannot, I tell you. [*More calmly.*] Let me remain here, with you.

ASTA.

Well, I will not leave you.

ALLMERS.

[*Seizing her hand and holding it fast.*] Thank you for that! [*Looks out for a time over the fiord.*] Where is my little Eyolf now? [*Smiling sadly to her.*] Can you tell me that—my big, wise Eyolf? [*Shaking his head.*] No one in all the world can tell me that. I know only this one terrible thing—that he is gone from me.

ASTA.

[*Looking up to the left, and withdrawing her hand.*] Here they are coming.

[Mrs. ALLMERS *and* Engineer BORGHEIM *come down by the wood-path, she leading the way. She wears a dark dress and a black veil over her head. He has an umbrella under his arm.*

ALLMERS.

[*Going to meet her.*] How is it with you, Rita?

RITA.

[*Passing him.*] Oh, don't ask.

ALLMERS.

Why do you come here?

RITA.

Only to look for you. What are you doing?

ALLMERS.

Nothing. Asta came down to me.

RITA.

Yes, but before Asta came? You have been away from me all the morning.

ALLMERS.

I have been sitting here looking out over the water.

RITA.

Ugh,—how can you?

ALLMERS.

[*Impatiently.*] I like best to be alone now.

RITA.

[*Moving restlessly about.*] And then to sit still! To stay in one place!

ALLMERS.

I have nothing in the world to move for.

RITA.

I cannot bear to be anywhere long. Least of all here —with the fiord at my very feet.

ALLMERS.

It is just the nearness of the fiord——

RITA.

[*To* BORGHEIM.] Don't you think he should come back with the rest of us?

BORGHEIM.

[*To* ALLMERS.] I believe it would be better for you.

ALLMERS.

No, no; let me stay where I am.

RITA.

Then I will stay with you, Alfred.

ALLMERS.

Very well; do so, then. You remain too, Asta.

ASTA.

[*Whispers to* BORGHEIM.] Let us leave them alone!

BORGHEIM.

[*With a glance of comprehension.*] Miss Allmers, shall we go a little further—along the shore? For the very last time?

ASTA.

[*Taking her umbrella.*] Yes, come. Let us go a little further.

[ASTA *and* BORGHEIM *go out together behind the boat-shed.* ALLMERS *wanders about for a little. Then he seats himself on a stone under the trees on the left.*

RITA.

[*Comes up and stands before him, her hands folded and hanging down.*] Can you think the thought, Alfred—that we have lost Eyolf?

ALLMERS.

[*Looking sadly at the ground.*] We must accustom ourselves to think it.

RITA.

I cannot. I cannot. And then that horrible sight that will haunt me all my life long.

ALLMERS.

[*Looking up.*] What sight? What have you seen?

RITA.

I have seen nothing myself. I have only heard it told. Oh——!

ALLMERS.

You may as well tell me at once.

RITA.

I got Borgheim to go down with me to the pier——

ALLMERS.

What did you want there?

RITA.

To question the boys as to how it happened.

ALLMERS.

But we know that.

RITA.

We got to know more.

ALLMERS.

Well?

RITA.

It is not true that he disappeared all at once.

ALLMERS.

Do they say that now?

RITA.

Yes. They say they saw him lying down on the bottom. Deep down in the clear water.

ALLMERS.

[*Grinding his teeth.*] And they didn't save him!

RITA.

I suppose they could not.

ALLMERS.

They could swim—every one of them. Did they tell you how he was lying whilst they could see him?

RITA.

Yes. They said he was lying on his back. And with great, open eyes.

ALLMERS.

Open eyes. But quite still?

RITA.

Yes, quite still. And then something came and swept him away. They called it the undertow.

ALLMERS.

[*Nodding slowly.*] So that was the last they saw of him.

RITA.

[*Suffocated with tears.*] Yes.

ALLMERS.

[*In a dull voice.*] And never—never will any one see him again.

RITA.

[*Wailing.*] I shall see him day and night, as he lay down there.

ALLMERS.

With great, open eyes.

RITA.

[*Shuddering.*] Yes, with great, open eyes. I see them! I see them now!

ALLMERS.

[*Rises slowly and looks with quiet menace at her.*] Were they evil, those eyes, Rita?

RITA.

[*Turning pale.*] Evil——!

ALLMERS.

[*Going close up to her.*] Were they evil eyes that stared up? Up from the depths?

RITA.

[*Shrinking from him.*] Alfred——!

ALLMERS.

[*Following her.*] Answer me! Were they a child's evil eyes?

RITA.

[*Shrieks.*] Alfred! Alfred!

ALLMERS.

Now things have come about—just as you wished, Rita.

RITA.

I! What did *I* wish?

ALLMERS.

That Eyolf were not here.

RITA.

Never for a moment have I wished that! That Eyolf should not stand between us—that was what I wished.

ALLMERS.

Well, well—he does not stand between us any more.

RITA.

[*Softly, gazing straight before her.*] Perhaps now more than ever. [*With a sudden shudder.*] Oh, that horrible sight!

ALLMERS.

[*Nods.*] The child's evil eyes.

RITA.

[*In dread, recoiling from him.*] Let me be, Alfred! I am afraid of you. I have never seen you like this before.

ALLMERS.

[*Looks harshly and coldly at her.*] Sorrow makes us wicked and hateful.

RITA.

[*Terrified, and yet defiant.*] That is what I feel, too.

[ALLMERS *goes towards the right and looks out over the fiord.* RITA *seats herself at the table. A short pause.*

ALLMERS.

[*Turning his head towards her.*] You never really and truly loved him—never!

RITA.

[*With cold self-control.*] Eyolf would never let me take him really and truly to my heart.

ALLMERS.

Because you did not want to.

RITA.

Oh yes, I did. I did want to. But some one stood in the way—even from the first.

ALLMERS.

[*Turning right round.*] Do you mean that *I* stood in the way?

RITA.

Oh, no—not at first.

ALLMERS.

[*Coming nearer her.*] Who, then?

RITA.

His aunt.

ALLMERS.

Asta?

RITA.

Yes. Asta stood and barred the way for me.

ALLMERS.

Can you say that, Rita?

RITA.

Yes. Asta—she took him to her heart—from the moment that happened—that miserable fall.

ALLMERS.

If she did so, she did it in love.

RITA.

[*Vehemently.*] That is just it! I cannot endure to share anything with any one! Not in love.

ALLMERS.

We two should have shared him between us in love.

RITA.

[*Looking scornfully at him.*] We? Oh, the truth is you have never had any real love for him either.

ALLMERS.

[*Looks at her in astonishment.*] *I* have not——!

RITA.

No, you have not. At first you were so utterly taken up by that book of yours—about Responsibility.

ALLMERS.

[*Forcibly.*] Yes, I was. But my very book—I sacrificed for Eyolf's sake.

RITA.

Not out of love for him.

ALLMERS.

Why then, do you suppose?

RITA.

Because you were consumed with mistrust of yourself. Because you had begun to doubt whether you had any great vocation to live for in the world.

ALLMERS.

[*Observing her closely.*] Could you see that in me?

RITA.

Oh, yes—little by little. And then you needed something new to fill up your life.—It seems *I* was not enough for you any longer.

ALLMERS.

That is the law of change, Rita.

RITA.

And that was why you wanted to make a prodigy of poor little Eyolf.

ALLMERS.

That was not what I wanted. I wanted to make a happy human being of him.—That, and nothing more.

RITA.

But not out of love for him. Look into yourself! [*With a certain shyness of expression.*] Search out all that lies under—and behind your action.

ALLMERS.

[*Avoiding her eyes.*] There is something you shrink from saying.

RITA.

And you too.

ALLMERS.

[*Looks thoughtfully at her.*] If it is as you say, then we two have never really possessed our own child.

RITA.

No. Not in perfect love.

ALLMERS.

And yet we are sorrowing so bitterly for him.

RITA.

[*With sarcasm.*] Yes, isn't it curious that we should grieve like this over a little stranger boy?

ALLMERS.

[*With an outburst.*] Oh, don't call him a stranger!

RITA.

[*Sadly shaking her head.*] We never won the boy, Alfred. Not I—nor you either.

ALLMERS.

[*Wringing his hands.*] And now it is too late! Too late!

RITA.

And no consolation anywhere—in anything.

ALLMERS.

[*With sudden passion.*] Y o u are the guilty one in this!

RITA.

[*Rising.*] I!

ALLMERS.

Yes, you! It was your fault that he became—what he was! It was your fault that he could not save himself when he fell into the water.

RITA.

[*With a gesture of repulsion.*] Alfred—you s h a l l not throw the blame upon me!

ALLMERS.

[*More and more beside himself.*] Yes, yes, I do! It was you that left the helpless child unwatched upon the table.

RITA.

He was lying so comfortably among the cushions, and sleeping so soundly. And you had promised to look after him.

ALLMERS.

Yes, I had. [*Lowering his voice.*] But then you came —you, you, you—and lured me to you.

RITA.

[*Looking defiantly at him.*] Oh, better own at once that you forgot the child and everything else.

ALLMERS.

[*In suppressed desperation.*] Yes, that is true. [*Lower.*] I forgot the child—in your arms!

RITA.

[*Exasperated.*] Alfred! Alfred—this is intolerable of you!

ALLMERS.

[*In a low voice, clenching his fists before her face.*] In that hour you condemned little Eyolf to death.

RITA.

[*Wildly.*] You, too! You, too—if it is as you say!

ALLMERS.

Oh yes—call me to account, too—if you will. We have sinned, both of us. And so, after all, there was retribution in Eyolf's death.

RITA.

Retribution?

ALLMERS.

[*With more self-control.*] Yes. Judgment upon you and me. Now, as we stand here, we have our deserts. While he lived, we let ourselves shrink away from him in secret, abject remorse. We could not bear to see it — the thing he had to drag with him——

RITA.

[*Whispers.*] The crutch.

ALLMERS.

Yes, that. And now, what we now call sorrow and heartache—is really the gnawing of conscience, Rita. Nothing else.

RITA.

[*Gazing helplessly at him.*] I feel as if all this must end in despair—in madness for both of us. For we can never—never make it good again.

ALLMERS.

[*Passing into a calmer mood.*] I dreamed about Eyolf last night. I thought I saw him coming up from the pier. He could run like other boys. So nothing had happened to him—neither the one thing nor the other. And the torturing reality was nothing but a dream, I thought. Oh, how I thanked and blessed—— [*Checking himself.*] H'm!

RITA.

[*Looking at him.*] Whom?

ALLMERS.

[*Evasively.*] Whom——?

RITA.

Yes; whom did you thank and bless?

ALLMERS.

[*Putting aside the question.*] I was only dreaming, you know——

RITA.

One whom you yourself do not believe in?

ALLMERS.

That was how I felt, all the same. Of course, I was sleeping——

RITA.

[*Reproachfully.*] You should not have taught me to doubt, Alfred.

ALLMERS.

Would it have been right of me to let you go through life with your mind full of empty fictions?

RITA.

It would have been better for me; for then I should have had something to take refuge in. Now I am utterly at sea.

ALLMERS.

[*Observing her closely.*] If you had the choice now——. If you could follow Eyolf to where he is——?

RITA.

Yes? What then?

ALLMERS.

If you were fully assured that you would find him again—know him—understand him——?

RITA.

Yes, yes; what then?

ALLMERS.

Would you, of your own free will, take the leap over to him? Of your own free will leave everything behind you? Renounce your whole earthly life? Would you, Rita?

RITA.

[*Softly.*] Now, at once?

ALLMERS.

Yes; to-day. This very hour. Answer me—would you?

RITA.

[*Hesitating.*] Oh, I don't know, Alfred. No! I think I should have to stay here with you, a little while.

ALLMERS.

For my sake?

RITA.

Yes, only for your sake.

ALLMERS.

But afterwards? Would you then——? Answer!

RITA.

Oh, what can I answer? I could not go away from you. Never! Never!

ALLMERS.

But suppose now *I* went to Eyolf? And you had the fullest assurance that you would meet both him and me there. Then would you come over to us?

RITA.

I should want to—so much! so much! But——

ALLMERS.

Well?

RITA.

[*Moaning softly.*] I could not—I feel it. No, no, I never could! Not for all the glory of heaven!

ALLMERS.

Nor I.

RITA.

No, you feel it so, too, don't you, Alfred! You could not either, could you?

ALLMERS.

No. For it is here, in the life of earth, that we living beings are at home.

RITA.

Yes, here lies the kind of happiness that we can understand.

ALLMERS.

[*Darkly.*] Oh, happiness—happiness——

RITA.

You mean that happiness—that we can never find it again? [*Looks inquiringly at him.*] But if——? [*Vehemently.*] No, no; I dare not say it! Nor even think it!

ALLMERS.

Yes, say it—say it, Rita.

RITA.

[*Hesitatingly.*] Could we not try to——? Would it not be possible to forget him?

ALLMERS.

Forget Eyolf?

RITA.

Forget the anguish and remorse, I mean.

ALLMERS.

Can you wish it?

RITA.

Yes,—if it were possible. [*With an outburst.*] For this—I cannot bear this for ever! Oh, can we not think of something that will bring us forgetfulness!

ALLMERS.

[*Shakes his head.*] What could that be?

RITA.

Could we not see what travelling would do—far away from here?

ALLMERS.

From home? When you know you are never really well anywhere but here.

RITA.

Well, then, let us have crowds of people about us! Keep open house! Plunge into something that can deaden and dull our thoughts.

ALLMERS.

Such a life would be impossible for me.—No,—rather than that, I would try to take up my work again.

RITA.

[*Bitingly.*] Your work—the work that has always stood like a dead wall between us!

ALLMERS.

[*Slowly, looking fixedly at her.*] There must always be a dead wall between us two, from this time forth.

RITA.

Why must there——?

ALLMERS.

Who knows but that a child's great, open eyes are watching us day and night.

RITA.

[*Softly, shuddering.*] Alfred—how terrible to think of!

ALLMERS.

Our love has been like a consuming fire. Now it must be quenched——

RITA.

[*With a movement towards him.*] Quenched!

ALLMERS.

[*Hardly.*] It is quenched—in one of us.

RITA.

[*As if petrified.*] And you dare say that to me!

ALLMERS.

[*More gently.*] It is dead, Rita. But in what I now feel for you—in our common guilt and need of atonement—I seem to foresee a sort of resurrection——

RITA.

[*Vehemently.*] I don't care a bit about any resurrection!

ALLMERS.

Rita!

RITA.

I am a warm-blooded being! I don't go drowsing about—with fishes' blood in my veins. [*Wringing her hands.*] And now to be imprisoned for life—in anguish

and remorse! Imprisoned with one who is no longer mine, mine, mine!

ALLMERS.

It must have ended so, sometime, Rita.

RITA.

Must have ended so! The love that in the beginning rushed forth so eagerly to meet with love!

ALLMERS.

My love did not rush forth to you in the beginning.

RITA.

What did you feel for me, first of all?

ALLMERS.

Dread.

RITA.

That I can understand. How was it, then, that I won you after all?

ALLMERS.

[*In a low voice.*] You were so entrancingly beautiful, Rita.

RITA.

[*Looks searchingly at him.*] Then that was the only reason? Say it, Alfred! The only reason?

ALLMERS.

[*Conquering himself.*] No, there was another as well.

RITA.

[*With an outburst.*] I can guess what that was! It was "my gold, and my green forests," as you call it. Was it not so, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

Yes.

RITA.

[*Looks at him with deep reproach.*] How could you—how could you!

ALLMERS.

I had Asta to think of.

RITA.

[*Angrily.*] Yes, Asta! [*Bitterly.*] Then it was really Asta that brought us two together?

ALLMERS.

She knew nothing about it. She has no suspicion of it, even to this day.

RITA.

[*Rejecting the plea.*] It was Asta, nevertheless! [*Smiling, with a sidelong glance of scorn.*] Or, no—it was little Eyolf. Little Eyolf, my dear!

ALLMERS.

Eyolf——?

RITA.

Yes, you used to call her Eyolf, did you not? I seem to remember your telling me so—once, in a moment of

confidence. [*Coming up to him.*] Do you remember it —that entrancingly beautiful hour, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

[*Recoiling, as if in horror.*] I remember nothing! I will not remember!

RITA.

[*Following him.*] It was in that hour—when your other little Eyolf was crippled for life!

ALLMERS.

[*In a hollow voice, supporting himself against the table.*] Retribution!

RITA.

[*Menacingly.*] Yes, retribution!

[ASTA *and* BORGHEIM *return by way of the boat-shed. She is carrying some water-lilies in her hand.*

RITA.

[*With self-control.*] Well, Asta, have you and Mr. Borgheim talked things thoroughly over?

ASTA.

Oh, yes—pretty well.

[*She puts down her umbrella and lays the flowers upon a chair.*

BORGHEIM.

Miss Allmers has been very silent during our walk.

RITA.

Indeed, has she? Well, Alfred and I have talked things out thoroughly enough——

ASTA.

[*Looking eagerly at both of them.*] What is this——?

RITA.

Enough to last all our lifetime, I say. [*Breaking off.*] Come now, let us go up to the house, all four of us. We must have company about us in future. It will never do for Alfred and me to be alone.

ALLMERS.

Yes, do you go ahead, you two. [*Turning.*] I must speak a word to you before we go, Asta.

RITA.

[*Looking at him.*] Indeed? Well then, you come with me, Mr. Borgheim.

[RITA *and* BORGHEIM *go up the wood-path.*

ASTA.

[*Anxiously.*] Alfred, what is the matter?

ALLMERS.

[*Darkly.*] Only that I cannot endure to be here any more.

ASTA.

Here! With Rita, do you mean?

ALLMERS.

Yes. Rita and I cannot go on living together.

ASTA.

[*Seizes his arm and shakes it.*] Oh, Alfred—don't say anything so terrible!

ALLMERS.

It is the truth I am telling you. We are making each other wicked and hateful.

ASTA.

[*With painful emotion.*] I had never—never dreamt of anything like this!

ALLMERS.

I did not realise it either, till to-day.

ASTA.

And now you want to——! What is it you really want, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

I want to get away from everything here—far, far away from it all.

ASTA.

And to stand quite alone in the world?

ALLMERS.

[*Nods.*] As I used to, before, yes.

ASTA.

But you are not fitted for living alone!

ALLMERS.

Oh, yes. I was so in the old days, at any rate.

ASTA.

In the old days, yes; for then you had me with you.

ALLMERS.

[*Trying to take her hand.*] Yes. And it is to you, Asta, that I now want to come home again.

ASTA.

[*Eluding him.*] To me! No, no, Alfred! That is quite impossible.

ALLMERS.

[*Looks sadly at her.*] Then Borgheim stands in the way after all?

ASTA.

[*Earnestly.*] No, no; he does not! That is quite a mistake!

ALLMERS.

Good. Then I will come to you—my dear, dear sister. I must come to you again—home to you, to be purified and ennobled after my life with——

ASTA.

[*Shocked.*] Alfred,—you are doing Rita a great wrong!

ALLMERS.

I have done her a great wrong. But not in this. Oh, think of it, Asta—think of our life together, yours and mine. Was it not like one long holy-day from first to last?

ASTA.

Yes, it was, Alfred. But we can never live it over again.

ALLMERS.

[*Bitterly.*] Do you mean that marriage has so irreparably ruined me?

ASTA.

[*Quietly.*] No, that is not what I mean.

ALLMERS.

Well, then we two will live our old life over again.

ASTA.

[*With decision.*] We cannot, Alfred.

ALLMERS.

Yes, we can. For the love of a brother and sister——

ASTA.

[*Eagerly.*] What of it?

ALLMERS.

That is the only relation in life that is not subject to the law of change.

ASTA.

[*Softly and tremblingly.*] But if that relation were not——

ALLMERS.

Not——?

ASTA.

——not our relation?

ALLMERS.

[*Stares at her in astonishment.*] Not ours? Why, what can you mean by that?

ASTA.

It is best I should tell you at once, Alfred.

ALLMERS.

Yes, yes; tell me!

ASTA.

The letters to mother——. Those in my portfolio——

ALLMERS.

Well?

ASTA.

You must read them—when I am gone.

ALLMERS.

Why must I?

ASTA.

[*Struggling with herself.*] For then you will see that——

ALLMERS.

Well?

ASTA.

—that I have no right to bear your father's name.

ALLMERS.

[*Staggering backwards.*] Asta! What is this you say!

ASTA.

Read the letters. Then you will see—and understand. And perhaps have some forgiveness—for mother, too.

ALLMERS.

[*Clutching at his forehead.*] I cannot grasp this—I cannot realise the thought. You, Asta—you are not——

ASTA.

You are not my brother, Alfred.

ALLMERS.

[*Quickly, half defiantly, looking at her.*] Well, but what difference does that really make in our relation? Practically none at all.

ASTA.

[*Shaking her head.*] It makes all the difference, Alfred. Our relation is not that of brother and sister.

ALLMERS.

No, no. But it is none the less sacred for that—it will always be equally sacred.

ASTA.

Do not forget—that it is subject to the law of change, as you said just now.

ALLMERS.

[*Looks inquiringly at her.*] Do you mean that——

ASTA.

[*Quietly, but with warm emotion.*] Not a word more —my dear, dear Alfred. [*Takes up the flowers from the chair.*] Do you see these water-lilies?

ALLMERS.

[*Nodding slowly.*] They are the sort that shoot up—from the very depth.

ASTA.

I pulled them in the tarn—where it flows out into the fiord. [*Holds them out to him.*] Will you take them, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

[*Taking them.*] Thanks.

ASTA.

[*With tears in her eyes.*] They are a last greeting to you, from—from little Eyolf.

ALLMERS.

[*Looking at her.*] From Eyolf out yonder? Or from you?

ASTA.

[*Softly.*] From both of us. [*Taking up her umbrella.*] Now come with me to Rita.

[*She goes up the wood-path.*

ALLMERS.

[*Takes up his hat from the table, and whispers sadly.*] Asta. Eyolf. Little Eyolf——!

[*He follows her up the path.*

ACT THIRD

An elevation, overgrown with shrubs, in ALLMERS'S *garden. At the back a sheer cliff, with a railing along its edge, and with steps on the left leading downwards. An extensive view over the fiord, which lies deep below. A flagstaff with lines, but no flag, stands by the railing. In front, on the right, a summer-house, covered with creepers and wild vines. Outside it, a bench. It is a late summer evening, with clear sky. Deepening twilight.*

ASTA *is sitting on the bench, with her hands in her lap. She is wearing her outdoor dress and a hat, has her parasol at her side, and a little travelling-bag on a strap over her shoulder.*

BORGHEIM *comes up from the back on the left. He, too, has a travelling-bag over his shoulder. He is carrying a rolled-up flag.*

BORGHEIM.

[*Catching sight of* ASTA.] Oh, so you are up here!

ASTA.

Yes, I am taking my last look out over the fiord.

BORGHEIM.

Then I am glad I happened to come up.

ASTA.

Have you been searching for me?

BORGHEIM.

Yes, I have. I wanted to say good-bye to you—for the present. Not for good and all, I hope.

ASTA.

[*With a faint smile.*] You are persevering.

BORGHEIM.

A road-maker has got to be.

ASTA.

Have you seen anything of Alfred? Or of Rita?

BORGHEIM.

Yes, I saw them both.

ASTA.

Together?

BORGHEIM.

No—apart.

ASTA.

What are you going to do with that flag?

BORGHEIM.

Mrs. Allmers asked me to come up and hoist it.

ASTA.

Hoist a flag just now?

BORGHEIM.

Half-mast high. She wants it to fly both night and day, she says.

ASTA.

[*Sighing.*] Poor Rita! And poor Alfred!

BORGHEIM.

[*Busied with the flag.*] Have you the heart to leave them? I ask, because I see you are in travelling-dress.

ASTA.

[*In a low voice.*] I m u s t go.

BORGHEIM.

Well, if you must, then——

ASTA.

And you are going, too, to-night?

BORGHEIM.

I must, too. I am going by the train. Are you going that way?

ASTA.

No. I shall take the steamer.

BORGHEIM.

[*Glancing at her.*] We each take our own way, then?

ASTA.

Yes.

[*She sits and looks on while he hoists the flag half-mast high. When he has done he goes up to her.*

BORGHEIM.

Miss Asta——you can't think how grieved I am about little Eyolf.

ASTA.

[*Looks up at him.*] Yes, I am sure you feel it deeply.

BORGHEIM.

And the feeling tortures me. For the fact is, grief is not much in my way.

ASTA.

[*Raising her eyes to the flag.*] It will pass over in time —all of it. All our sorrow.

BORGHEIM.

All? Do you believe that?

ASTA.

Like a squall at sea. When once you have got far away from here, then——

BORGHEIM.

It will have to be very far away indeed.

ASTA.

And then you have this great new road-work, too.

BORGHEIM.

But no one to help me in it.

ASTA.

Oh yes, surely you have.

BORGHEIM.

[*Shaking his head.*] No one. No one to share the gladness with. For it is gladness that most needs sharing.

ASTA.

Not the labour and trouble?

BORGHEIM.

Pooh—that sort of thing one can always get through alone.

ASTA.

But the gladness—that must be shared with some one, you think?

BORGHEIM.

Yes; for if not, where would be the pleasure in being glad?

ASTA.

Ah yes—perhaps there is something in that.

BORGHEIM.

Oh, of course, for a certain time you can go on feeling glad in your own heart. But it won't do in the long run. No, it takes two to be glad.

ASTA.

Always two? Never more? Never many?

BORGHEIM.

Well, you see—then it becomes a quite different matter. Miss Asta—are you sure you can never make up your mind to share gladness and success and—and labour and trouble, with one—with one alone in all the world?

ASTA.

I have tried it—once.

BORGHEIM.

Have you?

ASTA.

Yes, all the time that my brother—that Alfred and I lived together.

BORGHEIM.

Oh, with your brother, yes. But that is altogether different. That ought rather to be called peace than happiness, I should say.

ASTA.

It was delightful, all the same.

BORGHEIM.

There now—you see even that seemed to you delightful. But just think now—if he had not been your brother!

ASTA.

[*Makes a movement to rise, but remains sitting.*] Then we should never have been together. For I was a child then—and he wasn't much more.

BORGHEIM.

[*After a pause.*] W a s it so delightful—that time?

ASTA.

Oh yes, indeed it was.

BORGHEIM.

Was there much that was really bright and happy in your life then?

ASTA.

Oh yes, so much. You cannot think how much.

BORGHEIM.

Tell me a little about it, Miss Asta.

ASTA.

Oh, there are only trifles to tell.

BORGHEIM.

Such as——? Well?

ASTA.

Such as the time when Alfred had passed his examination—and had distinguished himself. And then, from time to time, when he got a post in some school or other.

Or when he would sit at home working at an article—and would read it aloud to me. And then when it would appear in some magazine.

BORGHEIM.

Yes, I can quite see that it must have been a peaceful, delightful life—a brother and sister sharing all their joys. [*Shaking his head.*] What I cannot understand is that your brother could ever give you up, Asta.

ASTA.

[*With suppressed emotion.*] Alfred married, you know.

BORGHEIM.

Was not that very hard for you?

ASTA.

Yes, at first. It seemed as though I had utterly lost him all at once.

BORGHEIM.

Well, luckily it was not so bad as that.

ASTA.

No.

BORGHEIM.

But, all the same—how could he! Go and marry, I mean—when he could have kept you with him, alone!

ASTA.

[*Looking straight in front of her.*] He was subject to the law of change, I suppose.

BORGHEIM.

The law of change?

ASTA.

So Alfred calls it.

BORGHEIM.

Pooh—what a stupid law that must be! I don't believe a bit in that law.

ASTA.

[*Rising.*] You may come to believe in it, in time.

BORGHEIM.

Never in all my life! [*Insistently.*] But listen now, Miss Asta! Do be reasonable—for once in a way—in this matter, I mean——

ASTA.

[*Interrupting him.*] Oh, no, no—don't let us begin upon t h a t again!

BORGHEIM.

[*Continuing as before.*] Yes, Asta—I can't possibly give you up so easily. Now your brother has everything as he wishes it. He can live his life quite contentedly without you. He doesn't require you at all. Then this—this—that at one blow has changed your whole position here——

ASTA.

[*With a start.*] What do you mean by that?

BORGHEIM.

The loss of the child. What else should I mean?

ASTA.

[*Recovering her self-control.*] Little Eyolf is gone, yes.

BORGHEIM.

And what more does that leave you to do here? You have not the poor little boy to take care of now. You have no duties—no claims upon you of any sort.

ASTA.

Oh, please, Mr. Borgheim—don't make it so hard for me.

BORGHEIM.

I must; I should be mad if I did not try my uttermost. I shall be leaving town before very long, and perhaps I shall have no opportunity of meeting you there. Perhaps I shall not see you again for a long, long time. And who knows what may happen in the meanwhile?

ASTA.

[*With a grave smile.*] So you are afraid of the law of change, after all?

BORGHEIM.

No, not in the least. [*Laughing bitterly.*] And there is nothing to be changed, either—not in you, I mean. For I can see you don't care much about me.

ASTA.

You know very well that I do.

BORGHEIM.

Perhaps, but not nearly enough. Not as I want you to. [*More forcibly.*] By Heaven, Asta—Miss Asta—I cannot tell you how strongly I feel that you are wrong in this! A little onward, perhaps, from to-day and to-morrow, all life's happiness may be awaiting us. And we must needs pass it by! Do you think we will not come to repent of it, Asta?

ASTA.

[*Quietly.*] I don't know. I only know that they are not for us—all these bright possibilities.

BORGHEIM.

[*Looks at her with self-control.*] Then I must make my roads alone?

ASTA.

[*Warmly.*] Oh, how I wish I could stand by you in it all! Help you in the labour—share the gladness with you——

BORGHEIM.

Would you—if you could?

ASTA.

Yes, that I would.

BORGHEIM.

But you cannot?

ASTA.

[*Looking down.*] Would you be content to have only half of me?

BORGHEIM.

No. You must be utterly and entirely mine.

ASTA.

[*Looks at him, and says quietly.*] Then I cannot.

BORGHEIM.

Good-bye then, Miss Asta.

[*He is on the point of going.* ALLMERS *comes up from the left at the back.* BORGHEIM *stops.*

ALLMERS.

[*The moment he has reached the top of the steps, points, and says in a low voice.*] Is Rita in there—in the summer-house?

BORGHEIM.

No; there is no one here but Miss Asta.

[ALLMERS *comes forward*

ASTA.

[*Going towards him.*] Shall I go down and look for her? Shall I get her to come up here?

ALLMERS.

[*With a negative gesture.*] No, no, no—let it alone. [*To* BORGHEIM.] Is it you that have hoisted the flag?

BORGHEIM.

Yes. Mrs. Allmers asked me to. That was what brought me up here.

ALLMERS.

And you are going to start to-night?

BORGHEIM.

Yes. To-night I go away in good earnest.

ALLMERS.

[*With a glance at* ASTA.] And you have made sure of pleasant company, I daresay.

BORGHEIM.

[*Shaking his head.*] I am going alone.

ALLMERS.

[*With surprise.*] Alone!

BORGHEIM.

Utterly alone.

ALLMERS.

[*Absently.*] Indeed?

BORGHEIM.

And I shall have to remain alone, too.

ALLMERS.

There is something horrible in being alone. The thought of it runs like ice through my blood——

ASTA.

Oh, but, Alfred, you are not alone.

ALLMERS.

There may be something horrible in that too, Asta.

ASTA.

[*Oppressed.*] Oh, don't talk like that! Don't think like that!

ALLMERS.

[*Not listening to her.*] But since you are not going with him——? Since there is nothing to bind you——? Why will you not remain out here with me—and with Rita?

ASTA.

[*Uneasily.*] No, no, I cannot. I must go back to town now.

ALLMERS.

But only in to town, Asta. Do you hear!

ASTA.

Yes.

ALLMERS.

And you must promise me that you will soon come out again.

ASTA.

[*Quickly.*] No, no, I dare not promise you that, for the present.

ALLMERS.

Well—as you will. We shall soon meet in town, then.

ASTA.

[*Imploringly.*] But, Alfred, you must stay at home here with Rita now.

ALLMERS.

[*Without answering, turns to* BORGHEIM.] You may find it a good thing, after all, that you have to take your journey alone.

BORGHEIM.

[*Annoyed.*] Oh, how can you say such a thing?

ALLMERS.

You see, you can never tell whom you might happen to meet afterwards—on the way.

ASTA.

[*Involuntarily.*] Alfred!

ALLMERS.

The right fellow-traveller—when it is too late—too late.

ASTA.

[*Softly, quivering.*] Alfred! Alfred!

BORGHEIM.

[*Looking from one to the other.*] What is the meaning of this? I don't understand——

[RITA *comes up from the left at the back.*

RITA.

[*Plaintively.*] Oh, don't go away from me, all of you!

ASTA.

[*Going towards her.*] You said you preferred to be alone.

RITA.

Yes, but I dare not. It is getting so horribly dark. I seem to see great, open eyes fixed upon me!

ASTA.

[*Tenderly and sympathetically.*] What if it were so, Rita? You ought not to be afraid of those eyes.

RITA.

How can you say so! Not afraid!

ALLMERS.

[*Insistently.*] Asta, I beg you—for Heaven's sake—remain here with Rita!

RITA.

Yes! And with Alfred, too. Do! Do, Asta!

ASTA.

[*Struggling with herself.*] Oh, I want to so much——

RITA.

Well, then, do it! For Alfred and I cannot go alone through the sorrow and heartache.

ALLMERS.

[*Darkly.*] Say, rather—through the ranklings of remorse.

RITA.

Oh, whatever you like to call it—we cannot bear it alone, we two. Oh, Asta, I beg and implore you! Stay here and help us! Take Eyolf's place for us——

ASTA.

[*Shrinking.*] Eyolf's——

RITA.

Yes, would you not have it so, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

If she can and will.

RITA.

You used to call her your little Eyolf. [*Seizes her hand.*] Henceforth you shall be o u r Eyolf, Asta! Eyolf, as you were before.

ALLMERS.

[*With concealed emotion.*] Remain—and share our life with us, Asta. With Rita. With me. With me—your brother!

ASTA.

[*With decision, snatches her hand away.*] No. I cannot. [*Turning.*] Mr. Borgheim—what time does the steamer start?

BORGHEIM.

Now—at once.

ASTA.

Then I must go on board. Will you go with me?

BORGHEIM.

[*With a suppressed outburst of joy.*] Will I? Yes, yes!

ASTA.

Then come!

RITA.

[*Slowly.*] Ah! That is how it is. Well, then, you cannot stay with us.

ASTA.

[*Throwing her arms round her neck.*] Thanks for everything, Rita! [*Goes up to* ALLMERS *and grasps his hand.*] Alfred—good-bye! A thousand times, good-bye!

ALLMERS.

[*Softly and eagerly.*] What is this, Asta? It seems as though you were taking flight.

ASTA.

[*In subdued anguish.*] Yes, Alfred—I am taking flight.

ALLMERS.

Flight—from me!

ASTA.

[*Whispering.*] From you—and from myself.

ALLMERS.

[*Shrinking back.*] Ah——!

[ASTA *rushes down the steps at the back.* BORGHEIM *waves his hat and follows her.* RITA *leans against the entrance to the summer-house.* ALLMERS *goes, in strong inward emotion, up to the railing, and stands there gazing downwards. A pause.*

ALLMERS.

[*Turns, and says with hard-won composure.*] There comes the steamer. Look, Rita.

RITA.

I dare not look at it.

ALLMERS.

You dare not?

RITA.

No. For it has a red eye—and a green one, too. Great, glowing eyes.

ALLMERS.

Oh, those are only the lights, you know.

RITA.

Henceforth they are eyes—for me. They stare and stare out of the darkness—and into the darkness.

ALLMERS.

Now she is putting in to shore.

RITA.

Where are they mooring her this evening, then?

ALLMERS.

[*Coming forward.*] At the pier, as usual——

RITA.

[*Drawing herself up.*] How c a n they moor her there!

ALLMERS.

They must.

RITA.

But it was there that Eyolf——! How c a n they moor her there!

ALLMERS.

Yes, life is pitiless, Rita.

RITA.

Men are heartless. They take no thought—either for the living or for the dead.

ALLMERS.

There you are right. Life goes its own way—just as if nothing in the world had happened.

RITA.

[*Gazing straight before her.*] And nothing h a s happened, either. Not to others. Only to us two.

ALLMERS.

[*The pain re-awakening.*] Yes, Rita—so it was to no purpose that you bore him in sorrow and anguish. For now he is gone again—and has left no trace behind him.

RITA.

Only the crutch was saved.

ALLMERS.

[*Angrily.*] Be silent! Do not let me hear that word!

RITA.

[*Plaintively.*] Oh, I cannot bear the thought that he is gone from us.

ALLMERS.

[*Coldly and bitterly.*] You could very well do without him while he was with us. Half the day would often pass without your setting eyes on him.

RITA.

Yes, for I knew that I could see him whenever I wanted to.

ALLMERS.

Yes, that is how we have gone and squandered the short time we had with Little Eyolf.

RITA.

[*Listening, in dread.*] Do you hear, Alfred! Now it is ringing again!

ALLMERS.

[*Looking over the fiord.*] It is the steamer's bell that is ringing. She is just starting.

RITA.

Oh, it's not that bell I mean. All day I have heard it ringing in my ears.—Now it is ringing again!

ALLMERS.

[*Going up to her.*] You are mistaken, Rita.

RITA.

No, I hear it so plainly. It sounds like a knell. Slow. Slow. And always the same words.

ALLMERS.

Words? What words?

RITA.

[*Nodding her head in the rhythm.*] "The crútch is—flóating. The crútch is—flóating." Oh, surely you must hear it, too!

ALLMERS.

[*Shaking his head.*] I hear nothing. And there is nothing to hear.

RITA.

Oh, you may say what you will—I hear it so plainly.

ALLMERS.

[*Looking out over the railing.*] Now they are on board, Rita. Now the steamer is on her way to the town.

RITA.

Is it possible you do not hear it? "The crútch is—flóating. The crútch is— ——"

ALLMERS.

[*Coming forward.*] You shall not stand there listening to a sound that does not exist. I tell you, Asta and Borgheim are on board. They have started already. Asta is gone.

RITA.

[*Looks timidly at him.*] Then I suppose you will soon be gone, too, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

[*Quickly.*] What do you mean by that?

RITA.

That you will follow your sister.

ALLMERS.

Has Asta told you anything?

RITA.

No. But you said yourself it was for Asta's sake that—that we came together.

ALLMERS.

Yes, but you, you yourself, have bound me to you—by our life together.

RITA.

Oh, in your eyes I am not—I am not—entrancingly beautiful any more.

ALLMERS.

The law of change may perhaps keep us together, none the less.

RITA.

[*Nodding slowly.*] There is a change in me now—I feel the anguish of it.

ALLMERS.

Anguish?

RITA.

Yes, for change, too, is a sort of birth.

ALLMERS.

It is—or a resurrection. Transition to a higher life.

RITA.

[*Gazing sadly before her.*] Yes—with the loss of all, all life's happiness.

ALLMERS.

That loss is just the gain.

RITA.

[*Vehemently.*] Oh, phrases! Good God, we are creatures of earth after all.

ALLMERS.

But something akin to the sea and the heavens too, Rita.

RITA.

You perhaps. Not I.

ALLMERS.

Oh, yes—you too, more than you yourself suspect.

RITA.

[*Advancing a pace towards him.*] Tell me, Alfred—could you think of taking up your work again?

ALLMERS.

The work that you have hated so.

RITA.

I am easier to please now. I am willing to share you with the book.

ALLMERS.

Why?

RITA.

Only to keep you here with me—to have you near me.

ALLMERS.

Oh, it is so little I can do to help you, Rita.

RITA.

But perhaps I could help you.

ALLMERS.

With my book, do you mean?

RITA.

No; but to live your life.

ALLMERS.

[*Shaking his head.*] I seem to have no life to live.

RITA.

Well then, to endure your life.

ALLMERS.

[*Darkly, looking away from her.*] I think it would be best for both of us that we should part.

RITA.

[*Looking curiously at him.*] Then where would you go? Perhaps to Asta, after all?

ALLMERS.

No—never again to Asta.

RITA.

Where then?

ALLMERS.

Up into the solitudes.

RITA.

Up among the mountains? Is that what you mean?

ALLMERS.

Yes.

RITA.

But all that is mere dreaming, Alfred! You could not live up there.

ALLMERS.

And yet I feel myself drawn to them.

RITA.

Why? Tell me!

ALLMERS.

Sit down—and I will tell you something.

RITA.

Something that happened to you up there?

ALLMERS.

Yes.

RITA.

And that you never told Asta and me?

ALLMERS.

Yes.

RITA.

Oh, you are so silent about everything. You ought not to be.

ALLMERS.

Sit down there—and I will tell you about it.

RITA.

Yes, yes—tell me!

[*She sits on the bench beside the summer-house.*

ALLMERS.

I was alone up there, in the heart of the great mountains. I came to a wide, dreary mountain lake; and that lake I had to cross. But I could not—for there was neither a boat nor any one there.

RITA.

Well? And then?

ALLMERS.

Then I went without any guidance into a side valley. I thought that by that way I could push on over the heights and between the peaks—and then down again on the other side of the lake.

RITA.

Oh, and you lost yourself, Alfred!

ALLMERS.

Yes; I mistook the direction—for there was no path or track. And all day I went on—and all the next night. And at last I thought I should never see the face of man again.

RITA.

Not come home to us? Oh, then, I am sure your thoughts were with us here.

ALLMERS.

No—they were not.

RITA.

Not?

ALLMERS.

No. It was so strange. Both you and Eyolf seemed to have drifted far, far away from me—and Asta, too.

RITA.

Then what did you think of?

ALLMERS.

I did not think. I dragged myself along among the precipices—and revelled in the peace and luxury of death.

RITA.

[*Springing up.*] Oh, don't speak in that way of that horror!

ALLMERS.

I did not feel it so. I had no fear. Here went death and I, it seemed to me, like two good fellow-travellers. It all seemed so natural—so simple, I thought. In my family, we don't live to be old——

RITA.

Oh, don't say such things, Alfred! You see you came safely out of it, after all.

ALLMERS.

Yes; all of a sudden, I found myself where I wanted to be—on the other side of the lake.

RITA.

It must have been a night of terror for you, Alfred. But now that it is over, you will not admit it to yourself.

ALLMERS.

That night sealed my resolution. And it was then that I turned about and came straight homewards. To Eyolf.

RITA.

[*Softly.*] Too late.

ALLMERS.

Yes. And then when—my fellow-traveller came and took him—t h e n I felt the horror of it; of it all; of all that, in spite of everything, we dare not tear ourselves away from. So earth-bound are we, both of us, Rita.

RITA.

[*With a gleam of joy.*] Yes, you are, too, are you not! [*Coming close to him.*] Oh, let us live our life together as long as we can!

ALLMERS.

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Live our life, yes! And have nothing to fill life with. An empty void on all sides —wherever I look.

RITA.

[*In fear.*] Oh, sooner or later you will go away from me, Alfred! I feel it! I can see it in your face! You will go away from me.

ALLMERS.

With my fellow-traveller, do you mean?

RITA.

No, I mean worse than that. Of your own free will you will leave me—for you think it's only here, with me, that you have nothing to live for. Is not that what is in your thoughts?

ALLMERS.

[*Looking steadfastly at her.*] What if it were——?

[*A disturbance, and the noise of angry, quarrelling voices is heard from down below, in the distance.* ALLMERS *goes to the railing.*

RITA.

What is that? [*With an outburst.*] Oh, you'll see, they have found him!

ALLMERS.

He will never be found.

RITA.

But what is it then?

ALLMERS.

[*Coming forward.*] Only fighting—as usual.

RITA.

Down on the beach?

ALLMERS.

Yes. The whole village down there ought to be swept away. Now the men have come home—drunk, as they always are. They are beating the children—do you hear the boys crying! The women are shrieking for help for them——

RITA.

Should we not get some one to go down and help them?

ALLMERS.

[*Harshly and angrily.*] Help them, who did not help Eyolf! Let them go—as they let Eyolf go.

RITA.

Oh, you must not talk like that, Alfred! Nor think like that!

ALLMERS.

I cannot think otherwise. All the old hovels ought to be torn down.

RITA.

And then what is to become of all the poor people?

ALLMERS.

They must go somewhere else.

RITA.

And the children, too?

ALLMERS.

Does it make much difference where they go to the dogs?

RITA.

[*Quietly and reproachfully.*] You are forcing yourself into this harshness, Alfred.

ALLMERS.

[*Vehemently.*] I have a right to be harsh now! It is my duty.

RITA.

Your duty?

ALLMERS.

My duty to Eyolf. He must not lie unavenged. Once for all, Rita—it is as I tell you! Think it over! Have the whole place down there razed to the ground—when I am gone.

RITA.

[*Looks intently at him.*] When you are gone?

ALLMERS.

Yes. For that will at least give you something to fill your life with—and something you must have.

RITA.

[*Firmly and decidedly.*] There you are right—I must. But can you guess what I will set about—when you are gone?

ALLMERS.

Well, what?

RITA.

[*Slowly and with resolution.*] As soon as you are gone from me, I will go down to the beach, and bring all the poor neglected children home with me. All the mischievous boys——

ALLMERS.

What will you do with them here?

RITA.

I will take them to my heart.

ALLMERS.

You!

RITA.

Yes, I will. From the day you leave me, they shall all be here, all of them, as if they were mine.

ALLMERS.

[*Shocked.*] In our little Eyolf's place!

RITA.

Yes, in our little Eyolf's place. They shall live in Eyolf's rooms. They shall read his books. They shall play with his toys. They shall take it in turns to sit in his chair at table.

ALLMERS.

But this is sheer madness in you! I do not know a creature in the world that is less fitted than you for anything of that sort.

RITA.

Then I shall have to educate myself for it; to train myself; to discipline myself.

ALLMERS.

If you are really in earnest about this—about all you say—then there must indeed be a change in you.

RITA.

Yes, there is, Alfred—and for that I have you to thank. You have made an empty place within me; and I must try to fill it up with something—with something that is a little like love.

ALLMERS.

[*Stands for a moment lost in thought; then looks at her.*] The truth is, we have not done much for the poor people down there.

RITA.

We have done nothing for them.

ALLMERS.

Scarcely even thought of them.

RITA.

Never thought of them in sympathy.

ALLMERS.

We, who had "the gold, and the green forests"——

RITA.

Our hands were closed to them. And our hearts too.

ALLMERS.

[*Nods.*] Then it was perhaps natural enough, after all, that they should not risk their lives to save little Eyolf.

RITA.

[*Softly.*] Think, Alfred! Are you so certain that—that we would have risked ours?

ALLMERS.

[*With an uneasy gesture of repulsion.*] You must never doubt that.

RITA.

Oh, we are children of earth.

ALLMERS.

What do you really think you can do with all these neglected children?

RITA.

I suppose I must try if I cannot lighten and—and ennoble their lot in life.

ALLMERS.

If you can do that—then Eyolf was not born in vain.

RITA.

Nor taken from us in vain, either.

ALLMERS.

[*Looking steadfastly at her.*] Be quite clear about o n e thing, Rita—it is not love that is driving you to this.

RITA.

No, it is not—at any rate, not yet.

ALLMERS.

Well, then what is it?

RITA.

[*Half-evasively.*] You have so often talked to Asta of human responsibility——

ALLMERS.

Of the book that you hated.

RITA.

I hate that book still. But I used to sit and listen to what you told her. And now I will try to continue it—in my own way.

ALLMERS.

[*Shaking his head.*] It is not for the sake of that unfinished book——

RITA.

No, I have another reason as well.

ALLMERS.

What is that?

RITA.

[*Softly, with a melancholy smile.*] I want to make my peace with the great, open eyes, you see.

ALLMERS.

[*Struck, fixing his eyes upon her.*] Perhaps, I could join you in that? And help you, Rita?

RITA.

Would you?

ALLMERS.

Yes—if I were only sure I could.

RITA.

[*Hesitatingly.*] But then you would have to remain here.

ALLMERS.

[*Softly.*] Let us try if it could not be so.

RITA.

[*Almost inaudibly.*] Yes, let us, Alfred.

[*Both are silent. Then* ALLMERS *goes up to the flag-staff and hoists the flag to the top.* RITA *stands beside the summer-house and looks at him in silence.*

ALLMERS.

[*Coming forward again.*] We have a heavy day of work before us, Rita.

RITA.

You will see—that now and then a Sabbath peace will descend on us.

ALLMERS.

[*Quietly, with emotion.*] Then, perhaps, we shall know that the spirits are with us.

RITA.

[*Whispering.*] The spirits?

ALLMERS.

[*As before.*] Yes, they will perhaps be around us—those whom we have lost.

RITA.

[*Nods slowly.*] Our little Eyolf. And your big Eyolf, too.

ALLMERS.

[*Gazing straight before him.*] Now and then, perhaps, we may still—on the way through life—have a little, passing glimpse of them.

RITA.

Where shall we look for them, Alfred?

ALLMERS.

[*Fixing his eyes upon her.*] Upwards.

RITA.

[*Nods in approval.*] Yes, yes—upwards.

ALLMERS.

Upwards—towards the peaks. Towards the stars. And towards the great silence.

RITA.

[*Giving him her hand.*] Thanks!

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN

INTRODUCTION*

THE anecdotic history of *John Gabriel Borkman* is even scantier than that of *Little Eyolf*. It is true that two mentions of it occur in Ibsen's letters, but they throw no light whatever upon its spiritual antecedents. Writing to George Brandes from Christiania, on April 24, 1896, Ibsen says: "In your last letter you make the suggestion that I should visit London. If I knew enough English, I might perhaps go. But as I unfortunately do not, I must give up the idea altogether. Besides, I am engaged in preparing for a big new work, and I do not wish to put off the writing of it longer than necessary. It might so easily happen that a roof-tile fell on my head before I had 'found time to make the last verse.' And what then?" On October 3 of the same year, writing to the same correspondent, he again alludes to his work as "a new long play, which must be completed as soon as possible." It was, as a matter of fact, completed with very little delay, for it appeared in Copenhagen on December 15, 1896.

The irresponsible gossip of the time made out that Björnson discerned in the play some personal allusions to himself; but this Björnson emphatically denied. I am not aware that any attempt has been made to identify

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the originals of the various characters. It need scarcely be pointed out that in the sisters Gunhild and Ella we have the pair of women, one strong and masterful, the other tender and devoted, who run through so many of Ibsen's plays, from *The Feast at Solhoug* onwards—nay, even from *Catilina*. In my Introduction to *The Lady from the Sea* (p. 202) it is pointed out that Ibsen had the character of Foldal clearly in his mind when, in March, 1880, he made the first draft of that play. The character there appears as: "The old married clerk. Has written a play in his youth which was only once acted. Is for ever touching it up, and lives in the illusion that it will be published and will make a great success. Takes no steps, however, to bring this about. Nevertheless accounts himself one of the 'literary' class. His wife and children believe blindly in the play." By the time Foldal actually came to life, the faith of his wife and children had sadly dwindled away.

We find in the *Literary Remains* only brief and unimportant fragments of the preliminary studies for this play. They tell us nothing more notable than that Borkman at first bore the incurably prosaic name of Jens, and that he was originally conceived as occupying his leisure by playing Beethoven on the violin, to a pianoforte accompaniment provided by Frida Foldal.

There was scarcely a theatre in Scandinavia or Finland at which *John Gabriel Borkman* was not acted in the course of January 1897. Helsingfors led the way with performances both at the Swedish and at the Finnish Theatres on January 10. Christiania and Stockholm followed on January 25, Copenhagen on January 31; and

meanwhile the piece had been presented at many provincial theatres as well. In Christiania, Borkman, Gunhild, and Ella were played by Garmann, Fru Gundersen, and Fröken Reimers respectively; in Copenhagen, by Emil Poulsen, Fru Eckhardt, and Fru Hennings. In the course of 1897 it spread all over Germany, beginning with Frankfort on Main, where, oddly enough, it was somewhat maltreated by the Censorship. In London, an organisation calling itself the New Century Theatre presented *John Gabriel Borkman* at the Strand Theatre on the afternoon of May 3, 1897, with Mr. W. H. Vernon as Borkman, Miss Geneviève Ward as Gunhild, Miss Elizabeth Robins as Ella Rentheim, Mr. Martin Harvey as Erhart, Mr. James Welch as Foldal, and Mrs. Beerbohm Tree as Mrs. Wilton. The first performance in America was given by the Criterion Independent Theatre of New York on November 18, 1897, Mr. E. J. Henley playing Borkman, Mr. John Blair Erhart, Miss Maude Banks Gunhild, and Miss Ann Warrington Ella. For some reason, which I can only conjecture to be the weakness of the third act, the play seems nowhere to have taken a very firm hold on the stage.

Dr. Brahm has drawn attention to the great similarity between the theme of *John Gabriel Borkman* and that of *Pillars of Society*. "In both," he says, "we have a business man of great ability who is guilty of a crime; in both this man is placed between two sisters; and in both he renounces a marriage of inclination for the sake of a marriage that shall further his business interests." The likeness is undeniable; and yet how utterly unlike are the two plays! and how immeasurably superior the later one!

It may seem, on a superficial view, that in *John Gabriel Borkman* Ibsen had returned to prose and the common earth after his excursion into poetry and the possibly supernatural, if I may so call it, in *The Master Builder* and *Little Eyolf*. But this is a very superficial view indeed. We have only to compare the whole invention of *John Gabriel Borkman* with the invention of *Pillars of Society*, to realise the difference between the poetry and the prose of drama. The quality of imagination which conceived the story of the House of Bernick is utterly unlike that which conceived the tragedy of the House of Borkman. The difference is not greater between (say) *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear*.

The technical feat which Ibsen here achieves of carrying through without a single break the whole action of a four-act play has been much commented on and admired. The imaginary time of the drama is actually shorter than the real time of representation, since the poet does not even leave intervals for the changing of the scenes. This feat, however, is more curious than important. Nothing particular is gained by such a literal observance of the unity of time. For the rest, we feel definitely in *John Gabriel Borkman* what we already felt vaguely in *Little Eyolf*—that the poet's technical staying-power is beginning to fail him. We feel that the initial design was larger and more detailed than the finished work. If the last acts of *The Wild Duck* and *Hedda Gabler* be compared with the last acts of *Little Eyolf* and *Borkman*, it will be seen that in the earlier plays his constructive faculty is working at its highest tension up to the very end, while in the later plays it relaxes towards the close,

to make room for pure imagination and lyric beauty. The actual drama is over long before the curtain falls on either play, and in the one case we have Rita and Allmers, in the other Ella and Borkman, looking back over their shattered lives and playing chorus to their own tragedy. For my part, I set the highest value on these choral odes, these mournful antiphones, in which the poet definitely triumphs over the mere playwright. They seem to me noble and beautiful in themselves, and as truly artistic, if not as theatrical, as any abrupter catastrophe could be. But I am not quite sure that they are exactly the conclusions the poet originally projected, and still less am I satisfied that they are reached by precisely the paths which he at first designed to pursue.

The traces of a change of scheme in *John Gabriel Borkman* seem to me almost unmistakable. The first two acts laid the foundation for a larger and more complex superstructure than is ultimately erected. Ibsen seems to have designed that Hinkel, the man who "betrayed" Borkman in the past, should play some efficient part in the alienation of Erhart from his family and home. Otherwise, why this insistence on a "party" at the Hinkels', which is apparently to serve as a sort of "send-off" for Erhart and Mrs. Wilton? It appears in the third act that the "party" was imaginary. "Erhart and I were the whole party," says Mrs. Wilton, "and little Frida, of course." We might, then, suppose it to have been a mere blind to enable Erhart to escape from home; but, in the first place, as Erhart does not live at home, there is no need for any such pretext; in the second place, it appears that the trio do actually go to the Hinkels' house (since

Mrs. Borkman's servant finds them there), and do actually make it their starting-point. Erhart comes and goes with the utmost freedom in Mrs. Wilton's own house; what possible reason can they have for not setting out from there? No reason is shown or hinted. We cannot even imagine that the Hinkels have been instrumental in bringing Erhart and Mrs. Wilton together; it is expressly stated that Erhart made her acquaintance and saw a great deal of her in town, before she moved out into the country. The whole conception of the party at the Hinkels' is, as it stands, mysterious and a little cumbersome. We are forced to conclude, I think, that something more was at one time intended to come of it, and that, when the poet abandoned the idea, he did not think it worth while to remove the scaffolding. To this change of plan, too, we may possibly trace what I take to be the one serious flaw in the play—the comparative weakness of the second half of the third act. The scene of Erhart's rebellion against the claims of mother, aunt, and father strikes one as the symmetrical working out of a problem rather than a passage of living drama.

All this means, of course, that there is a certain looseness of fibre in *John Gabriel Borkman* which we do not find in the best of Ibsen's earlier works. But in point of intellectual power and poetic beauty it yields to none of its predecessors. The conception of the three leading figures is one of the great things of literature; the second act, with the exquisite humour of the Foldal scene, and the dramatic intensity of the encounter between Borkman and Ella, is perhaps the finest single act Ibsen ever wrote, in prose at all events; and the last scene is a thing of rare

and exalted beauty. One could wish that the poet's last words to us had been those haunting lines with which Gunhild and Ella join hands over Borkman's body:

> We twin sisters—over him we both have loved.
> We two shadows—over the dead man.[1]

Among many verbal difficulties which this play presents, the greatest, perhaps, has been to find an equivalent for the word "opreisning," which occurs again and again in the first and second acts. No one English word that I could discover would fit in all the different contexts; so I have had to employ three: "redemption," "restoration," and in one place "rehabilitation." The reader may bear in mind that these three terms represent one idea in the original.

Borkman in Act II. uses a very odd expression—"overskurkens moral," which I have rendered "the morals of the higher rascality." I cannot but suspect (though for this I have no authority) that in the word "overskurk," which might be represented in German by "Ueberschurke," Borkman is parodying the expression "Uebermensch," of which so much has been heard of late. When I once suggested this to Ibsen, he neither affirmed

[1] In the first draft this passage runs thus:

ELLA RENTHEIM: The cold has killed him.
MRS. BORKMAN: Ah, Ella, the cold had killed him long ago.
ELLA RENTHEIM: Us too.
MRS. BORKMAN: You are right there.
ELLA RENTHEIM: We are three dead people—we three here.
MRS. BORKMAN: We are. So perhaps we two can join hands, Ella.
ELLA RENTHEIM: (*Quietly.*) Over the third. Yes.

How the poet has transfigured the passage in re-writing it!

nor denied it. I understood him to say, however, that in speaking of "overskurken" he had a particular man in view. Somewhat pusillanimously, perhaps, I pursued my inquiries no further.

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN
(1896)

PERSONS

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN, *formerly Managing Director of a Bank.*
MRS. GUNHILD BORKMAN, *his wife.*
ERHART BORKMAN, *their son, a student.*
MISS ELLA RENTHEIM, *Mrs. Borkman's twin sister.*
MRS. FANNY WILTON.
VILHELM FOLDAL, *subordinate clerk in a Government office.*
FRIDA FOLDAL, *his daughter.*
MRS. BORKMAN'S MAID.

The action passes one winter evening, at the Manor-house of the Rentheim family, in the neighbourhood of Christiania.

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN

PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

ACT FIRST

MRS. BORKMAN'S *drawing-room, furnished with old-fashioned, faded splendour. At the back, an open sliding-door leads into a garden-room, with windows and a glass door. Through it a view over the garden; twilight with driving snow. On the right, a door leading from the hall. Further forward, a large old-fashioned iron stove, with the fire lighted. On the left, towards the back, a single smaller door. In front, on the same side, a window, covered with thick curtains. Between the window and the door a horsehair sofa, with a table in front of it covered with a cloth. On the table, a lighted lamp with a shade. Beside the stove a high-backed armchair.*

MRS. GUNHILD BORKMAN *sits on the sofa, crocheting. She is an elderly lady, of cold, distinguished appearance, with stiff carriage and immobile features. Her abundant hair is very grey. Delicate transparent hands. Dressed in a gown of heavy dark silk, which has originally been handsome, but is now somewhat worn and shabby. A woollen shawl over her shoulders.*

She sits for a time erect and immovable at her crocheting. Then the bells of a passing sledge are heard.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Listens; her eyes sparkle with gladness and she involuntarily whispers.*] Erhart! At last!

[*She rises and draws the curtain a little aside to look out. Appears disappointed, and sits down to her work again, on the sofa. Presently* THE MAID *enters from the hall with a visiting card on a small tray.*

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Quickly.*] Has Mr. Erhart come after all?

THE MAID.

No, ma'am. But there's a lady——

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Laying aside her crocheting.*] Oh, Mrs. Wilton, I suppose——

THE MAID.

[*Approaching.*] No, it's a strange lady——

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Taking the card.*] Let me see—— [*Reads it; rises hastily and looks intently at the girl.*] Are you sure this is for me?

THE MAID.

Yes, I understand it was for you, ma'am.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Did she say she wanted to see Mrs. Borkman?

THE MAID.

Yes, she did.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Shortly, resolutely.*] Good. Then say I am at home.

[THE MAID *opens the door for the strange lady and goes out.* MISS ELLA RENTHEIM *enters. She resembles her sister; but her face has rather a suffering than a hard expression. It still shows signs of great beauty, combined with strong character. She has a great deal of hair, which is drawn back from the forehead in natural ripples, and is snow-white. She is dressed in black velvet, with a hat and a fur-lined cloak of the same material.*

[*The two sisters stand silent for a time, and look searchingly at each other. Each is evidently waiting for the other to speak first.*

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Who has remained near the door.*] You are surprised to see me, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Standing erect and immovable between the sofa and the table, resting her finger-tips upon the cloth.*] Have you not made a mistake? The bailiff lives in the side wing, you know.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

It is not the bailiff I want to see to-day.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Is it me you want, then?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes. I have a few words to say to you.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Coming forward into the middle of the room.*] Well—then sit down.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Thank you. I can quite well stand for the present.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Just as you please. But at least loosen your cloak.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Unbuttoning her cloak.*] Yes, it is very warm here.

MRS. BORKMAN.

I am always cold.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Stands looking at her for a time with her arms resting on the back of the armchair.*] Well, Gunhild, it is nearly eight years now since we saw each other last.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Coldly.*] Since last we spoke to each other at any rate.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

True, since we spoke to each other. I daresay you have seen me now and again—when I came on my yearly visit to the bailiff.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Once or twice, I have.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I have caught one or two glimpses of you, too—there, at the window.

MRS. BORKMAN.

You must have seen me through the curtains then. You have good eyes. [*Harshly and cuttingly.*] But the last time we s p o k e to each other—it was here in this room——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Trying to stop her.*] Yes, yes; I know, Gunhild!

MRS. BORKMAN.

—the week before he—before he was let out.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Moving towards the back.*] Oh, don't speak about that.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Firmly, but in a low voice.*] It was the week before he—was set at liberty.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Coming down.*] Oh yes, yes, yes! I shall never forget that time! But it is too terrible to think of! Only to recall it for a moment—oh!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Gloomily.*] And yet one's thoughts can never get away from it! [*Vehemently; clenching her hands together.*] No, I can't understand it! I never shall! I can't understand how such a thing—how anything so horrible can come upon one single family! And then—that it should be o u r family! So old a family as ours! Think of its choosing us out!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh, Gunhild—there were many, many families besides ours that t h a t blow fell upon.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Oh yes; but those others don't trouble me very much. For in their case it was only a matter of a little money—or some papers. But for us——! For me! And then for Erhart! My little boy—as he then was! [*In rising excitement.*] The shame that fell upon us two innocent ones! The dishonour! The hateful, terrible dishonour! And then the utter ruin too!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Cautiously.*] Tell me, Gunhild, how does he bear it?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Erhart, do you mean?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

No—he himself. How does he bear it?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Scornfully.*] Do you think I ever ask about t h a t ?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Ask? Surely you do not require to ask——

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looks at her in surprise.*] You don't suppose I ever have anything to do with him? That I ever meet him? That I see anything of him?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Not even that!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*As before.*] The man who was in gaol, in gaol for five years! [*Covers her face with her hands.*] Oh, the crushing shame of it! [*With increased vehemence.*] And then to think of all that the name of John Gabriel Borkman used to mean! No, no, no—I can never see him again! Never!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looks at her for a while.*] You have a hard heart, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Towards h i m, yes.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

After all, he is your husband.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Did he not say in court that it was I who began his ruin? That I spent money so recklessly?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Tentatively.*] But is there not some truth in that?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Why, it was he himself that made me do it! He insisted on our living in such an absurdly lavish style——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, I know. But that is just where you should have restrained him; and apparently you didn't.

MRS. BORKMAN.

How was I to know that it was not his own money he gave me to squander? And that he himself used to squander, too—ten times more than I did!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Quietly.*] Well, I daresay his position forced him to do that—to some extent at any rate.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Scornfully.*] Yes, it was always the same story—we were to "cut a figure." And he did "cut a figure" to some purpose! He used to drive about with a four-in-hand as if he were a king. And he had people bowing and scraping to him just as to a king. [*With a laugh.*] And they always called him by his Christian names—all

the country over—as if he had been the king himself. "John Gabriel," "John Gabriel." Every one knew what a great man "John Gabriel" was!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Warmly and emphatically.*] He was a great man then.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, to all appearance. But he never breathed a single word to me as to his real position—never gave a hint as to where he got his means from.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

No, no; and other people did not dream of it either.

MRS. BORKMAN.

I don't care about the other people. But it was his duty to tell m e the truth. And that he never did! He kept on lying to me—lying abominably——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Interrupting.*] Surely not, Gunhild. He kept things back perhaps, but I am sure he did not lie.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Well, well; call it what you please; it makes no difference. And then it all fell to pieces—the whole thing.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*To herself.*] Yes, everything fell to pieces—for him —and for others.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Drawing herself up menacingly.*] But I tell you this, Ella, I do not give in yet! I shall redeem myself yet—you may make up your mind to that!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Eagerly.*] Redeem yourself! What do you mean by that?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Redeem my name, and honour, and fortune! Redeem my ruined life—that is what I mean! I have some one in reserve, let me tell you—one who will wash away every stain that h e has left.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Gunhild! Gunhild!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With rising excitement.*] There is an avenger living, I tell you! One who will make up to me for all his father's sins!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Erhart you mean.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, Erhart, my own boy! He will redeem the family, the house, the name. All that can be redeemed.—And perhaps more besides.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

And how do you think that is to be done?

MRS. BORKMAN.

It must be done as best it can; I don't know how. But I know that it must and shall be done. [*Looks searchingly at her.*] Come now, Ella; isn't that really what you have had in mind too, ever since he was a child?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

No, I can't exactly say that.

MRS. BORKMAN.

No? Then why did you take charge of him when the storm broke upon—upon this house?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

You could not look after him yourself at that time, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN.

No, no, I could not. And his father—he had a valid enough excuse—while he was there—in safe keeping——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Indignant.*] Oh, how can you say such things!—You!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a venomous expression.*] And how could you make up your mind to take charge of the child of a—a John Gabriel! Just as if he had been your own? To take the child away from me—home with you—and keep him there year after year, until the boy was nearly grown up. [*Looking suspiciously at her.*] What was your real reason, Ella? Why did you keep him with you?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I came to love him so dearly——

MRS. BORKMAN.

More than I—his mother?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Evasively.*] I don't know about that. And then, you know, Erhart was rather delicate as a child——

MRS. BORKMAN.

Erhart—delicate!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, I thought so—at that time at any rate. And you know the air of the west coast is so much milder than here.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Smiling bitterly.*] H'm—is it indeed? [*Breaking off.*] Yes, it is true you have done a great deal for Erhart. [*With a change of tone.*] Well, of course, you could afford it. [*Smiling.*] You were so lucky, Ella; you managed to save all your money.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Hurt.*] I did not m a n a g e anything about it, I assure you. I had no idea—until long, long afterwards—that the securities belonging to me—that they had been left untouched.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Well, well; I don't understand anything about these things! I only say you were lucky. [*Looking inquiringly*

at her.] But when you, of your own accord, undertook to educate Erhart for me—what was your motive in that?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking at her.*] My motive?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, some motive you must have had. What did you want to do with him? To make of him, I mean?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Slowly.*] I wanted to smooth the way for Erhart to happiness in life.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Contemptuously.*] Pooh—people situated as we are have something else than happiness to think of.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

What, then?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking steadily and earnestly at her.*] Erhart has in the first place to make so brilliant a position for himself, that no trace shall be left of the shadow his father has cast upon my name—and my son's.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Searchingly.*] Tell me, Gunhild, is t h i s what Erhart himself demands of his life?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Slightly taken aback.*] Yes, I should hope so!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Is it not rather what y o u demand of him?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Curtly.*] Erhart and I always make the same demands upon ourselves.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Sadly and slowly.*] You are so very certain of your boy, then, Gunhild?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With veiled triumph.*] Yes, that I am—thank Heaven. You may be sure of that!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Then I should think in reality you must be happy after all; in spite of all the rest.

MRS. BORKMAN.

So I am—so far as that goes. But then, every moment, all the rest comes rushing in upon me like a storm.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With a change of tone.*] Tell me—you may as well tell me at once—for that is really what I have come for——

MRS. BORKMAN.

What?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Something I felt I must talk to you about.—Tell me—Erhart does not live out here with—with you others?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Harshly.*] Erhart c a n n o t live out here with me. He has to live in town——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

So he wrote to me.

MRS. BORKMAN.

He must, for the sake of his studies. But he comes out to me for a little while every evening.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Well, may I see him then? May I speak to him at once?

MRS. BORKMAN.

He has not come yet; but I expect him every moment.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Why, Gunhild, surely he m u s t have come. I can hear his footsteps overhead.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a rapid upward glance.*] Up in the long gallery?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes. I have heard him walking up and down there ever since I came.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking away from her.*] That is not Erhart, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Surprised.*] Not Erhart? [*Divining.*] Who is it then?

MRS. BORKMAN.

It is he.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Softly, with suppressed pain.*] Borkman? John Gabriel Borkman?

MRS. BORKMAN.

He walks up and down like that—backwards and forwards—from morning to night—day out and day in.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I have heard something of this——

MRS. BORKMAN.

I daresay. People find plenty to say about us, no doubt.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Erhart has spoken of it in his letters. He said that his father generally remained by himself—up there—and you alone down here.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes; that is how it has been, Ella, ever since they let him out, and sent him home to me. All these long eight years.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I never believed it could really be so. It seemed impossible!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Nods.*] It is so; and it can never be otherwise.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking at her.*] This must be a terrible life, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Worse than terrible—almost unendurable.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, it must be.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Always to hear his footsteps up there—from early morning till far into the night. And everything sounds so clear in this house!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, it is strange how clear the sound is.

MRS. BORKMAN.

I often feel as if I had a sick wolf pacing his cage up there in the gallery, right over my head. [*Listens and whispers.*] Hark! Do you hear! Backwards and forwards, up and down, goes the wolf.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Tentatively.*] Is no change possible, Gunhild?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a gesture of repulsion.*] He has never made any movement towards a change.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Could you not make the first movement, then?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Indignantly.*] I! After all the wrong he has done me! No, thank you! Rather let the wolf go on prowling up there.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

This room is too hot for me. You must let me take off my things after all.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, I asked you to.

[ELLA RENTHEIM *takes off her hat and cloak and lays them on a chair beside the door leading to the hall.*

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Do you never happen to meet him, away from home?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a bitter laugh.*] In society, do you mean?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I mean, when he goes out walking. In the woods, or——

MRS. BORKMAN.

He never goes out.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Not even in the twilight?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Never.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With emotion.*] He cannot bring himself to go out?

MRS. BORKMAN.

I suppose not. He has his great cloak and his hat hanging in the cupboard—the cupboard in the hall, you know——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*To herself.*] The cupboard we used to hide in when we were little——

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Nods.*] And now and then—late in the evening—I can hear him come down as though to go out. But he always stops when he is halfway downstairs, and turns back—straight back to the gallery.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Quietly.*] Do none of his old friends ever come up to see him?

MRS. BORKMAN.

He h a s no old friends.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

He had so many—once.

MRS. BORKMAN.

H'm! He took the best possible way to get rid of them. He was a d e a r friend to his friends, was John Gabriel.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh yes, that is true, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Vehemently.*] All the same, I call it mean, petty, base, contemptible of them, to think so much of the paltry losses they may have suffered through him. They were only money losses, nothing more.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Not answering her.*] So he lives up there quite alone. Absolutely by himself.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, practically so. They tell me an old clerk or copyist or something comes out to see him now and then.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Ah, indeed; no doubt it is a man called Foldal. I know they were friends as young men.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, I believe they were. But I know nothing about him. He was quite outside our circle—when we h a d a circle——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

So h e comes out to see Borkman now?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, he condescends to. But of course he only comes when it is dark.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

This Foldal—he was one of those that suffered when the bank failed.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Carelessly.*] Yes, I believe I heard he had lost some money. But no doubt it was something quite trifling.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With slight emphasis.*] It was all he possessed.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Smiling.*] Oh, well; what h e possessed must have been little enough—nothing to speak of.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

And he d i d not speak of it—Foldal I mean—during the investigation.

MRS. BORKMAN.

At all events, I can assure you Erhart has made ample amends for any little loss he may have suffered.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With surprise.*] Erhart! How can Erhart have done that?

MRS. BORKMAN.

He has taken an interest in Foldal's youngest daughter. He has taught her things, and put her in the way of getting employment, and some day providing for herself. I am sure that is a great deal more than her father could ever have done for her.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, I daresay her father can't afford to do much.

MRS. BORKMAN.

And then Erhart has arranged for her to have lessons in music. She has made such progress already that she can come up to—to him in the gallery, and play to him.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

So he is still fond of music?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Oh yes, I suppose he is. Of course he has the piano you sent out here—when he was expected back——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

And she plays to him on it?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, now and then—in the evenings. That is Erhart's doing, too.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Has the poor girl to come all the long way out here, and then go back to town again?

MRS. BORKMAN.

No, she doesn't need to. Erhart has arranged for her to stay with a lady who lives near us—a Mrs. Wilton——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With interest.*] Mrs. Wilton?

MRS. BORKMAN.

A very rich woman. You don't know her.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I have heard her name. Mrs. Fanny Wilton, is it not——?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, quite right.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Erhart has mentioned her several times. Does she live out here now?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, she has taken a villa here; she moved out from town some time ago.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With a slight hesitation.*] They say she is divorced from her husband.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Her husband has been dead for several years.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, but they were divorced. He got a divorce.

MRS. BORKMAN.

He deserted her, that is what he did. I am sure the fault wasn't hers.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Do you know her at all intimately, Gunhild?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Oh yes, pretty well. She lives close by here; and she looks in every now and then.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

And do you like her?

MRS. BORKMAN.

She is unusually intelligent; remarkably clear in her judgments.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

In her judgments of people, do you mean?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, principally of people. She has made quite a study of Erhart; looked deep into his character—into his soul. And the result is she idolises him, as she could not help doing.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With a touch of finesse.*] Then perhaps she knows Erhart still better than she knows you?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, Erhart saw a good deal of her in town, before she came out here.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Without thinking.*] And in spite of that she moved out of town?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Taken aback, looking keenly at her.*] In spite of that! What do you mean?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Evasively.*] Oh, nothing particular.

MRS. BORKMAN.

You said it so strangely—you d i d mean something by it, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking her straight in the eyes.*] Yes, that is true, Gunhild! I did mean something by it.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Well, then, say it right out.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

First let me tell you, I think I too have a certain claim upon Erhart. Do you think I haven't?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Glancing round the room.*] No doubt—after all the money you have spent upon him.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh, not on that account, Gunhild. But because I love him.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Smiling scornfully.*] Love my son? Is it possible? You? In spite of everything?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, it is possible—in spite of everything. And it is true. I love Erhart—as much as I can love any one—now—at my time of life.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Well, well, suppose you do: what then?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Why, then, I am troubled as soon as I see anything threatening him.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Threatening Erhart! Why, what should threaten him? Or who?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

You in the first place—in your way.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Vehemently.*] I!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

And then this Mrs. Wilton, too, I am afraid.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looks at her for a moment in speechless surprise.*] And you can think such things of Erhart! Of my own boy! He, who has his great mission to fulfil!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Lightly.*] Oh, his mission!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Indignantly.*] How dare you say that so scornfully?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Do you think a young man of Erhart's age, full of health and spirits—do you think he is going to sacrifice himself for—for such a thing as a "mission"?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Firmly and emphatically.*] Erhart will! I know he will.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Shaking her head.*] You neither know it nor believe it, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN.

I don't believe it!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

It is only a dream that you cherish. For if you hadn't that to cling to, you feel that you would utterly despair.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, indeed I should despair. [*Vehemently.*] And I daresay that is what you would like to see, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With head erect.*] Yes, I would rather see that than see you "redeem" yourself at Erhart's expense.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Threateningly.*] You want to come between us? Between mother and son? You?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I want to free him from your power—your will—your despotism.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Triumphantly.*] You are too late! You had him in your nets all those years—until he was fifteen. But now I have won him again, you see!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Then I will win him back from you! [*Hoarsely, half whispering.*] We two have fought a life-and-death battle before, Gunhild—for a man's soul!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking at her in triumph.*] Yes, and I won the victory.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With a smile of scorn.*] Do you still think that victory was worth the winning?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Darkly.*] No; Heaven knows you are right there.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

You need look for no victory worth the winning this time either.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Not when I am fighting to preserve a mother's power over my son!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

No; for it is only p o w e r over him that you want.

MRS. BORKMAN.

And you?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Warmly.*] I want his affection—his soul—his whole heart!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With an outburst.*] That you shall never have in this world!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking at her.*] You have seen to that?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Smiling.*] Yes. I have taken that liberty. Could you not see that in his letters?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Nods slowly.*] Yes. I could see you—the whole of you—in his letters of late.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Gallingly.*] I have made the best use of these eight years. I have had him under my own eye, you see.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Controlling herself.*] What have you said to Erhart about me? Is it the sort of thing you can tell me?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Oh yes, I can tell you well enough.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Then please do.

MRS. BORKMAN.

I have only told him the truth.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Well?

MRS. BORKMAN.

I have impressed upon him, every day of his life, that he must never forget that it is you we have to thank for being able to live as we do—for being able to live at all.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Is that all?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Oh, that is the sort of thing that rankles; I feel that in my own heart.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

But that is very much what Erhart knew already.

MRS. BORKMAN.

When he came home to me he imagined that you did it all out of goodness of heart. [*Looks malignly at her.*] Now he does not believe that any longer, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Then what does he believe now?

MRS. BORKMAN.

He believes what is the truth. I asked him how he accounted for the fact that Aunt Ella never came here to visit us——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Interrupting.*] He knew my reasons already!

MRS. BORKMAN.

He knows them better now. You had got him to believe that it was to spare me and—and him up there in the gallery——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

And so it was.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Erhart does not believe that for a moment, now.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

What have you put in his head?

MRS. BORKMAN.

He thinks, what is the truth, that you are ashamed of us—that you despise us. And do you pretend that you don't? Were you not once planning to take him quite away from me? Think, Ella; you cannot have forgotten.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With a gesture of negation.*] That was at the height of the scandal—when the case was before the courts. I have no such designs now.

MRS. BORKMAN.

And it would not matter if you had. For in that case what would become of his mission? No, thank you. It is me that Erhart needs—not you. And therefore he is as good as dead to you—and you to him.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Coldly, with resolution.*] We shall see. For now I shall remain out here.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Stares at her.*] Here? In this house?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, here.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Here—with us? Remain all night?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I shall remain here all the rest of my days if need be.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Collecting herself.*] Very well, Ella; the house is yours——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh, nonsense——

MRS. BORKMAN.

Everything is yours. The chair I am sitting in is yours. The bed I lie and toss in at night belongs to you. The food we eat comes to us from you.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

It can't be arranged otherwise, you know. Borkman can hold no property of his own; for some one would at once come and take it from him.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, I know. We must be content to live upon your pity and charity.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Coldly.*] I cannot prevent you from looking at it in that light, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN.

No, you cannot. When do you want us to move out?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking at her.*] Move out?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*In great excitement.*] Yes; you don't imagine that I will go on living under the same roof with you! I tell you, I would rather go to the workhouse or tramp the roads!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Good. Then let me take Erhart with me——

MRS. BORKMAN.

Erhart? My own son? My child?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes; for then I would go straight home again.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*After reflecting a moment, firmly.*] Erhart himself shall choose between us.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking doubtfully and hesitatingly at her.*] He choose? Dare you risk that, Gunhild?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a hard laugh.*] D a r e I? Let my boy choose between his mother and you? Yes, indeed I dare!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Listening.*] Is there some one coming? I thought I heard——

MRS. BORKMAN.

Then it must be Erhart.

[*There is a sharp knock at the door leading in from the hall, which is immediately opened.* MRS. WILTON *enters, in evening dress, and with outer wraps. She is followed by* THE MAID, *who has not had time to announce her, and looks bewildered. The door remains half open.* MRS. WILTON *is a strikingly handsome, well-developed woman in the thirties. Broad, red, smiling lips, sparkling eyes. Luxuriant dark hair.*

MRS. WILTON.

Good evening, my dearest Mrs. Borkman!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Rather drily.*] Good evening, Mrs. Wilton. [*To* THE MAID, *pointing toward the garden-room.*] Take out the lamp that is in there and light it.

[THE MAID *takes the lamp and goes out with it.*

MRS. WILTON.

[*Observing* ELLA RENTHEIM.] Oh, I beg your pardon —you have a visitor.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Only my sister, who has just arrived from——

[ERHART BORKMAN *flings the half-open door wide open and rushes in. He is a young man with bright cheerful eyes. He is well dressed; his moustache is beginning to grow.*

ERHART.

[*Radiant with joy; on the threshold.*] What is this! Is Aunt Ella here? [*Rushing up to her, and seizing her hands.*] Aunt, aunt! Is it possible? Are you here?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Throws her arms round his neck.*] Erhart! My dear, dear boy! Why, how big you have grown! Oh, how good it is to see you again!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Sharply.*] What does this mean, Erhart? Were you hiding out in the hall?

MRS. WILTON.

[*Quickly.*] Erhart—Mr. Borkman came in with me.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking hard at him.*] Indeed, Erhart! You don't come to your mother first.

ERHART.

I had just to look in at Mrs. Wilton's for a moment—to call for little Frida.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Is that Miss Foldal with you too?

MRS. WILTON.

Yes, we have left her in the hall.

ERHART.

[*Addressing some one through the open door.*] You can go right upstairs, Frida.

[*Pause.* ELLA RENTHEIM *observes* ERHART. *He seems embarrassed and a little impatient; his face has assumed a nervous and colder expression.*

[THE MAID *brings the lighted lamp into the garden-room, goes out again and closes the door behind her.*

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With forced politeness.*] Well, Mrs. Wilton, if you will give us the pleasure of your company this evening, won't you——

MRS. WILTON.

Many thanks, my dear lady, but I really can't. We have another invitation. We're going down to the Hinkels'.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking at her.*] We? Whom do you mean by we?

MRS. WILTON.

[*Laughing.*] Oh, I ought really to have said I. But I was commissioned by the ladies of the house to bring Mr. Borkman with me—if I happened to see him.

MRS. BORKMAN.

And you d i d happen to see him, it appears.

MRS. WILTON.

Yes, fortunately. He was good enough to look in at my house—to call for Frida.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Drily.*] But, Erhart, I did not know that you knew that family—those Hinkels?

ERHART.

[*Irritated.*] No, I don't exactly know them. [*Adds rather impatiently.*] You know better than anybody, mother, what people I know and don't know.

MRS. WILTON.

Oh, it doesn't matter! They soon put you at your ease in that house! They are such cheerful, hospitable people—the house swarms with young ladies.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With emphasis.*] If I know my son rightly, Mrs. Wilton, they are no fit company for him.

MRS. WILTON.

Why, good gracious, dear lady, he is young, too, you know!

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, fortunately he's young. He would need to be young.

ERHART.

[*Concealing his impatience.*] Well, well, well, mother, it's quite clear I can't go to the Hinkels' this evening. Of course I shall remain here with you and Aunt Ella.

MRS. BORKMAN.

I knew you would, my dear Erhart.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

No, Erhart, you must not stop at home on my account——

ERHART.

Yes, indeed, my dear Aunt; I can't think of going. [*Looking doubtfully at* MRS. WILTON.] But how shall we manage? Can I get out of it? You have said "Yes" for me, haven't you?

MRS. WILTON.

[*Gaily.*] What nonsense! Not get out of it! When I make my entrance into the festive halls—just imagine it!—deserted and forlorn—then I must simply say "No" for you.

ERHART.

[*Hesitatingly.*] Well, if you really think I can get out of it——

MRS. WILTON.

[*Putting the matter lightly aside.*] I am quite used to saying both yes and no—on my own account. And you can't possibly think of leaving your aunt the moment she has arrived! For shame, Monsieur Erhart! Would that be behaving like a good son?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Annoyed.*] Son?

MRS. WILTON.

Well, adopted son then, Mrs. Borkman.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, you may well add that.

MRS. WILTON.

Oh, it seems to me we have often more cause to be grateful to a foster-mother than to our own mother.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Has that been your experience?

MRS. WILTON.

I knew very little of my own mother, I am sorry to say. But if I had had a good foster-mother, perhaps I shouldn't have been so—so naughty, as people say I am.

[*Turning towards* ERHART.] Well, then, we stop peaceably at home like a good boy, and drink tea with mamma and auntie! [*To the ladies.*] Good-bye, good-bye Mrs. Borkman! Good-bye Miss Rentheim.

[*The ladies bow silently. She goes towards the door.*

ERHART.

[*Following her.*] Shan't I go a little bit of the way with you?

MRS. WILTON.

[*In the doorway, motioning him back.*] You shan't go a step with me. I am quite accustomed to taking my walks alone. [*Stops on the threshold, looks at him and nods.*] But now beware, Mr. Borkman—I warn you!

ERHART.

What am I to beware of?

MRS. WILTON.

[*Gaily.*] Why, as I go down the road—deserted and forlorn, as I said before—I shall try if I can't cast a spell upon you.

ERHART.

[*Laughing.*] Oh, indeed! Are you going to try that again?

MRS. WILTON.

[*Half seriously.*] Yes, just you beware! As I go down the road, I will say in my own mind—right from the very centre of my will—I will say: "Mr. Erhart Borkman, take your hat at once!"

MRS. BORKMAN.

And you think he will take it?

MRS. WILTON.

[*Laughing.*] Good heavens, yes, he'll snatch up his hat instantly. And then I will say: "Now put on your overcoat, like a good boy, Erhart Borkman! And your goloshes! Be sure you don't forget the goloshes! And then follow me! Do as I bid you, as I bid you, as I bid you!"

ERHART.

[*With forced gaiety.*] Oh, you may rely on that.

MRS. WILTON.

[*Raising her forefinger.*] As I bid you! As I bid you! Good-night!

[*She laughs and nods to the ladies, and closes the door behind her.*

MRS. BORKMAN.

Does she really play tricks of that sort?

ERHART.

Oh, not at all. How can you think so! She only says it in fun. [*Breaking off.*] But don't let us talk about Mrs. Wilton. [*He forces* ELLA RENTHEIM *to seat herself in the armchair beside the stove, then stands and looks at her.*] To think of your having taken all this long journey, Aunt Ella! And in winter too!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I found I had to, Erhart.

ERHART.

Indeed? Why so?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I had to come to town after all, to consult the doctors.

ERHART.

Oh, I'm glad of that!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Smiling.*] Are you glad of that?

ERHART.

I mean I am glad you made up your mind to it at last.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*On the sofa, coldly.*] Are you ill, Ella?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking hardly at her.*] You know quite well that I am ill.

MRS. BORKMAN.

I knew you were not strong, and hadn't been for years.

ERHART.

I told you before I left you that you ought to consult a doctor.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

There is no one in my neighbourhood that I have any real confidence in. And, besides, I did not feel it so much at that time.

ERHART.

Are you worse, then, Aunt?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, my dear boy; I am worse now.

ERHART.

But there's nothing dangerous?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh, that depends how you look at it.

ERHART.

[*Emphatically.*] Well, then, I tell you what it is, Aunt Ella; you mustn't think of going home again for the present.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

No, I am not thinking of it.

ERHART.

You must remain in town; for here you can have your choice of all the best doctors.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

That was what I thought when I left home.

ERHART.

And then you must be sure and find a really nice place to live—quiet, comfortable rooms.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I went this morning to the old ones, where I used to stay before.

ERHART.

Oh, well, you were comfortable enough there.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, but I shall not be staying there after all.

ERHART.

Indeed? Why not?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I changed my mind after coming out here.

ERHART.

[*Surprised.*] Really? Changed your mind?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Crocheting; without looking up.*] Your aunt will live here, in her own house, Erhart.

ERHART.

[*Looking from one to the other alternately.*] Here, with us? With us? Is this true, Aunt?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, that is what I have made up my mind to do.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*As before.*] Everything here belongs to your aunt, you know.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I intend to remain here, Erhart—just now—for the present. I shall set up a little establishment of my own, over in the bailiff's wing.

ERHART.

Ah, that's a good idea. There are plenty of rooms there. [*With sudden vivacity.*] But, by-the-bye, Aunt—aren't you very tired after your journey?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh yes, rather tired.

ERHART.

Well, then, I think you ought to go quite early to bed.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looks at him smilingly.*] I mean to.

ERHART.

[*Eagerly.*] And then we could have a good long talk to-morrow—or some other day, of course—about this and that—about things in general—you and mother and I. Wouldn't that be much the best plan, Aunt Ella?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With an outburst, rising from the sofa.*] Erhart, I can see you are going to leave me!

ERHART.

[*Starts.*] What do you mean by that?

MRS. BORKMAN.

You are going down to—to the Hinkels'?

ERHART.

[*Involuntarily.*] Oh, that! [*Collecting himself.*] Well, you wouldn't have me sit here and keep Aunt Ella up half the night? Remember, she's an invalid, mother.

MRS. BORKMAN.

You are going to the Hinkels', Erhart!

ERHART.

[*Impatiently.*] Well, really, mother, I don't think I can well get out of it. What do y o u say, Aunt?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I should like you to feel quite free, Erhart.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Goes up to her menacingly.*] You want to take him away from me!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Rising.*] Yes, if only I could, Gunhild!

[*Music is heard from above.*

ERHART.

[*Writhing as if in pain.*] Oh, I can't endure this! [*Looking round.*] What have I done with my hat? [*To*

ELLA RENTHEIM.] Do you know the air that she is playing up there?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

No. What is it?

ERHART.

It's the *Danse Macabre*—the Dance of Death! Don't you know the Dance of Death, Aunt?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Smiling sadly.*] Not yet, Erhart.

ERHART.

[*To* MRS. BORKMAN.] Mother—I beg and implore you —let me go!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looks hardly at him.*] Away from your mother? So that is what you want to do?

ERHART.

Of course I'll come out again—to-morrow perhaps.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With passionate emotion.*] You want to go away from me! To be with those strange people! With—with —no, I will not even think of it!

ERHART.

There are bright lights down there, and young, happy faces; and there's music there, mother!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Pointing upwards.*] There is music here, too, Erhart.

ERHART.

Yes, it's just that music that drives me out of the house.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Do you grudge your father a moment of self-forgetfulness?

ERHART.

No, I don't. I'm very, very glad that he should have it—if only *I* don't have to listen.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking solemnly at him.*] Be strong, Erhart! Be strong, my son! Do not forget that you have your great mission.

ERHART.

Oh mother—do spare me these phrases! I wasn't born to be a "missionary."—Good-night, aunt dear! Good-night, mother! [*He goes hastily out through the hall.*

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*After a short silence.*] It has not taken you long to recapture him, Ella, after all.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I wish I could believe it.

MRS. BORKMAN.

But you shall see you won't be allowed to keep him long.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Allowed? By you, do you mean?

MRS. BORKMAN.

By me or—by her, the other one——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Then rather she than you.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Nodding slowly.*] That I understand. I say the same. Rather she than you.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Whatever should become of him in the end——

MRS. BORKMAN.

It wouldn't greatly matter, I should say.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Taking her outdoor things upon her arm.*] For the first time in our lives, we twin sisters are of one mind. Good-night, Gunhild.

[*She goes out by the hall. The music sounds louder from above.*

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Stands still for a moment, starts, shrinks together, and whispers involuntarily.*] The wolf is whining again—the sick wolf. [*She stands still for a moment, then flings herself down on the floor, writhing in agony and whispering:*] Erhart! Erhart—be true to me! Oh, come home and help your mother! For I can bear this life no longer!

ACT SECOND

The great gallery on the first floor of the Rentheim House. The walls are covered with old tapestries, representing hunting-scenes, shepherds and shepherdesses, all in faded colours. A folding-door to the left, and further forward a piano. In the left-hand corner, at the back, a door, cut in the tapestry, and covered with tapestry, without any frame. Against the middle of the right wall, a large writing-table of carved oak, with many books and papers. Further forward on the same side, a sofa with a table and chairs in front of it. The furniture is all of a stiff Empire style. Lighted lamps on both tables.

JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN *stands with his hands behind his back, beside the piano, listening to* FRIDA FOLDAL, *who is playing the last bars of the "Danse Macabre."*

BORKMAN *is of middle height, a well-knit, powerfully-built man, well on in the sixties. His appearance is distinguished, his profile finely cut, his eyes piercing, his hair and beard curly and greyish-white. He is dressed in a slightly old-fashioned black coat, and wears a white necktie.* FRIDA FOLDAL *is a pretty, pale girl of fifteen, with a somewhat weary and overstrained expression. She is cheaply dressed in light colours.*

The music ceases. A pause.

BORKMAN.

Can you guess where I first heard tones like these?

FRIDA.

[*Looking up at him.*] No, Mr. Borkman.

BORKMAN.

It was down in the mines.

FRIDA.

[*Not understanding.*] Indeed? Down in the mines?

BORKMAN.

I am a miner's son, you know. Or perhaps you did not know?

FRIDA.

No, Mr. Borkman.

BORKMAN.

A miner's son. And my father used sometimes to take me with him into the mines. The metal sings down there.

FRIDA.

Really? Sings?

BORKMAN.

[*Nodding.*] When it is loosened. The hammer-strokes that loosen it are the midnight bell clanging to set it free; and that is why the metal sings—in its own way—for gladness.

FRIDA.

Why does it do that, Mr. Borkman?

BORKMAN.

It wants to come up into the light of day and serve mankind.

[*He paces up and down the gallery, always with his hands behind his back.*

FRIDA.

[*Sits waiting a little, then looks at her watch and rises.*] I beg your pardon, Mr. Borkman; but I am afraid I must go.

BORKMAN.

[*Stopping before her.*] Are you going already?

FRIDA.

[*Putting her music in its case.*] I really must. [*Visibly embarrassed.*] I have an engagement this evening.

BORKMAN.

For a party?

FRIDA.

Yes.

BORKMAN.

And you are to play before the company?

FRIDA.

[*Biting her lip.*] No; at least I am only to play for dancing.

BORKMAN.

Only for dancing?

FRIDA.

Yes; there is to be a dance after supper.

BORKMAN.

[*Stands and looks at her.*] Do you like playing dance music? At parties, I mean?

FRIDA.

[*Putting on her outdoor things.*] Yes, when I can get an engagement. I can always earn a little in that way.

BORKMAN.

[*With interest.*] Is that the principal thing in your mind as you sit playing for the dancers?

FRIDA.

No; I'm generally thinking how hard it is that I mayn't join in the dance myself.

BORKMAN.

[*Nodding.*] That is just what I wanted to know. [*Moving restlessly about the room.*] Yes, yes, yes. That you must not join in the dance, that is the hardest thing of all. [*Stopping.*] But there is one thing that should make up to you for that, Frida.

FRIDA.

[*Looking inquiringly at him.*] What is that, Mr. Borkman?

BORKMAN.

The knowledge that you have ten times more music in you than all the dancers together.

FRIDA.

[*Smiling evasively.*] Oh, that's not at all so certain.

BORKMAN.

[*Holding up his fore-finger warningly.*] You must never be so mad as to have doubts of yourself!

FRIDA.

But since no one knows it——

BORKMAN.

So long as you know it yourself, that is enough. Where is it you are going to play this evening?

FRIDA.

Over at Mr. Hinkel's.

BORKMAN.

[*With a swift, keen glance at her.*] Hinkel's, you say!

FRIDA.

Yes.

BORKMAN.

[*With a cutting smile.*] Does that man give parties? Can he get people to visit him?

FRIDA.

Yes, they have a great many people about them, Mrs. Wilton says.

BORKMAN.

[*Vehemently.*] But what sort of people? Can you tell me that?

FRIDA.

[*A little nervously.*] No, I really don't know. Yes, by-the-bye, I know that young Mr. Borkman is to be there this evening.

BORKMAN.

[*Taken aback.*] Erhart? My son?

FRIDA.

Yes, he is going there.

BORKMAN.

How do you know that?

FRIDA.

He said so himself—an hour ago.

BORKMAN.

Is he out here to-day?

FRIDA.

Yes, he has been at Mrs. Wilton's all the afternoon,

BORKMAN.

[*Inquiringly.*] Do you know if he called here too? I mean, did he see any one downstairs?

FRIDA.

Yes, he looked in to see Mrs. Borkman.

BORKMAN.

[*Bitterly.*] Aha—I might have known it.

FRIDA.

There was a strange lady calling upon her, I think.

BORKMAN.

Indeed? Was there? Oh yes, I suppose people do come now and then to see Mrs. Borkman.

FRIDA.

If I meet young Mr. Borkman this evening, shall I ask him to come up and see you too?

BORKMAN.

[*Harshly.*] You shall do nothing of the sort! I won't have it on any account. The people who want to see me can come of their own accord. I ask no one.

FRIDA.

Oh, very well; I shan't say anything then. Good-night, Mr. Borkman.

BORKMAN.

[*Pacing up and down and growling.*] Good-night.

FRIDA.

Do you mind if I run down by the winding stair? It's the shortest way.

BORKMAN.

Oh, by all means; take whatever stair you please, so far as I am concerned. Good-night to you!

FRIDA.

Good-night, Mr. Borkman.

[*She goes out by the little tapestry door in the back on the left.*

[BORKMAN, *lost in thought, goes up to the piano, and is about to close it, but changes his mind. Looks round the great empty room, and sets to pacing up and down it from the corner beside the piano to the corner at the back on the right—pacing backward and forward uneasily and incessantly. At last he goes up to the writing-table, listens in the direction of the folding door, hastily snatches up a hand-glass, looks at himself in it, and straightens his necktie.*

[*A knock at the folding door.* BORKMAN *hears it, looks rapidly towards the door, but says nothing.*

[*In a little there comes another knock, this time louder.*

BORKMAN.

[*Standing beside the writing-table with his left hand resting upon it, and his right thrust in the breast of his coat.*] Come in!

[VILHELM FOLDAL *comes softly into the room. He is a bent and worn man with mild blue eyes and long, thin grey hair straggling down over his coat collar.*

He has a portfolio under his arm, a soft felt hat, and large horn spectacles, which he pushes up over his forehead.

BORKMAN.

[*Changes his attitude and looks at* FOLDAL *with a half disappointed, half pleased expression.*] Oh, is it only you?

FOLDAL.

Good evening, John Gabriel. Yes, you see it is me.

BORKMAN.

[*With a stern glance.*] I must say you are rather a late visitor.

FOLDAL.

Well, you know, it's a good bit of a way, especially when you have to trudge it on foot.

BORKMAN.

But why do you always walk, Vilhelm? The tramway passes your door.

FOLDAL.

It's better for you to walk—and then you always save twopence. Well, has Frida been playing to you lately?

BORKMAN.

She has just this moment gone. Did you not meet her outside?

FOLDAL.

No, I have seen nothing of her for a long time; not since she went to live with this Mrs. Wilton.

BORKMAN.

[*Seating himself on the sofa and waving his hand toward a chair.*] You may sit down, Vilhelm.

FOLDAL.

[*Seating himself on the edge of a chair.*] Many thanks. [*Looks mournfully at him.*] You can't think how lonely I feel since Frida left home.

BORKMAN.

Oh, come—you have plenty left.

FOLDAL.

Yes, God knows I have—five of them. But Frida was the only one who at all understood me. [*Shaking his head sadly.*] The others don't understand me a bit.

BORKMAN.

[*Gloomily, gazing straight before him, and drumming on the table with his fingers.*] No, that's just it. T h a t is the curse we exceptional, chosen people have to bear. The common herd—the average man and woman—they do not understand us, Vilhelm.

FOLDAL.

[*With resignation.*] If it were only the lack of understanding—with a little patience, one could manage to

wait for that awhile yet. [*His voice choked with tears.*] But there is something still bitterer.

BORKMAN.

[*Vehemently.*] There is nothing bitterer than that.

FOLDAL.

Yes, there is, John Gabriel. I have gone through a domestic scene to-night—just before I started.

BORKMAN.

Indeed? What about?

FOLDAL.

[*With an outburst.*] My people at home—they despise me.

BORKMAN.

[*Indignantly.*] Despise——!

FOLDAL.

[*Wiping his eyes.*] I have long known it; but to-day it came out unmistakably.

BORKMAN.

[*After a short silence.*] You made an unwise choice, I fear, when you married.

FOLDAL.

I had practically no choice in the matter. And, you see, one feels a need for companionship as one begins

to get on in years. And so crushed as I then was—so utterly broken down——

BORKMAN.

[*Jumping up in anger.*] Is this meant for me? A reproach——!

FOLDAL.

[*Alarmed.*] No, no, for Heaven's sake, John Gabriel——!

BORKMAN.

Yes, you are thinking of the disaster to the bank, I can see you are!

FOLDAL.

[*Soothingly.*] But I don't blame you for that! Heaven forbid!

BORKMAN.

[*Growling, resumes his seat.*] Well, that is a good thing, at any rate.

FOLDAL.

Besides, you mustn't think it is my wife that I complain of. It is true she has not much polish, poor thing; but she is a good sort of woman all the same. No, it's the children.

BORKMAN.

I thought as much.

FOLDAL.

For the children—well, they have more culture, and therefore they expect more of life.

BORKMAN.

[*Looking at him sympathetically.*] And so your children despise you, Vilhelm?

FOLDAL.

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] I haven't made much of a career, you see—there is no denying that.

BORKMAN.

[*Moving nearer to him, and laying his hand upon his arm.*] Do they not know, then, that in your young days you wrote a tragedy?

FOLDAL.

Yes, of course they know that. But it doesn't seem to make much impression on them.

BORKMAN.

Then they don't understand these things. For your tragedy is good. I am firmly convinced of that.

FOLDAL.

[*Brightening up.*] Yes, don't you think there are some good things in it, John Gabriel? Good God, if I could only manage to get it placed——! [*Opens his portfolio, and begins eagerly turning over the contents.*] Look here! Just let me show you one or two alterations I have made.

BORKMAN.

Have you it with you?

FOLDAL.

Yes, I thought I would bring it. It's so long now since I have read it to you. And I thought perhaps it might amuse you to hear an act or two.

BORKMAN.

[*Rising, with a negative gesture.*] No, no, we will keep that for another time.

FOLDAL.

Well, well, as you please.

[BORKMAN *paces up and down the room.* FOLDAL *puts the manuscript up again.*

BORKMAN.

[*Stopping in front of him.*] You are quite right in what you said just now—you have not made any career. But I promise you this, Vilhelm, that when once the hour of my restoration strikes——

FOLDAL.

[*Making a movement to rise.*] Oh, thanks, thanks!

BORKMAN.

[*Waving his hand.*] No, please be seated. [*With rising excitement.*] When the hour of my restoration strikes—when they see that they cannot get on without me—when they come to me, here in the gallery, and crawl to my feet, and beseech me to take the reins of the bank again——! The new bank, that they have founded

and can't carry on—— [*Placing himself beside the writing-table in the same attitude as before, and striking his breast.*] Here I shall stand, and receive them! And it shall be known far and wide, all the country over, what conditions John Gabriel Borkman imposes before he will—— [*Stopping suddenly and staring at* FOLDAL.] You're looking so doubtfully at me! Perhaps you do not believe that they will come? That they m u s t, m u s t, m u s t come to me some day? Do you not believe it?

FOLDAL.

Yes, Heaven knows I do, John Gabriel.

BORKMAN.

[*Seating himself again on the sofa.*] I firmly believe it. I am immovably convinced—I k n o w that they will come. If I had not been certain of that I would have put a bullet through my head long ago.

FOLDAL.

[*Anxiously.*] Oh no, for Heaven's sake——!

BORKMAN.

[*Exultantly.*] But they will come! They will come sure enough! You shall see! I expect them any day, any moment. And you see, I hold myself in readiness to receive them.

FOLDAL.

[*With a sigh.*] If only they would come quickly.

BORKMAN.

[*Restlessly.*] Yes, time flies: the years slip away; life—— Ah, no—I dare not think of it! [*Looking at him.*] Do you know what I sometimes feel like?

FOLDAL.

What?

BORKMAN.

I feel like a Napoleon who has been maimed in his first battle.

FOLDAL.

[*Placing his hand upon his portfolio.*] I have that feeling too.

BORKMAN.

Oh, well, that is on a smaller scale, of course.

FOLDAL.

[*Quietly.*] My little world of poetry is very precious to me, John Gabriel.

BORKMAN.

[*Vehemently.*] Yes, but think of me, who could have created millions! All the mines I should have controlled! New veins innumerable! And the water-falls! And the quarries! And the trade routes, and steamship-lines all the wide world over! I would have organised it all—I alone!

FOLDAL.

Yes, I know, I know. There was nothing in the world you would have shrunk from.

BORKMAN.

[*Clenching his hands together.*] And now I have to sit here, like a wounded eagle, and look on while others pass me in the race, and take everything away from me, piece by piece!

FOLDAL.

That is my fate too.

BORKMAN.

[*Not noticing him.*] Only to think of it; so near to the goal as I was! If I had only had another week to look about me! All the deposits would have been covered. All the securities I had dealt with so daringly should have been in their places again as before. Vast companies were within a hair's-breadth of being floated. Not a soul should have lost a halfpenny.

FOLDAL.

Yes, yes; you were on the very verge of success.

BORKMAN.

[*With suppressed fury.*] And then treachery overtook me! Just at the critical moment! [*Looking at him.*] Do you know what I hold to be the most infamous crime a man can be guilty of?

FOLDAL.

No, tell me.

BORKMAN.

It is not murder. It is not robbery or housebreaking. It is not even perjury. For all these things people do to

those they hate, or who are indifferent to them, and do not matter.

FOLDAL.

What is the worst of all then, John Gabriel?

BORKMAN.

[*With emphasis.*] The most infamous of crimes is a friend's betrayal of his friend's confidence.

FOLDAL.

[*Somewhat doubtfully.*] Yes, but you know——

BORKMAN.

[*Firing up.*] What are you going to say? I see it in your face. But it is of no use. The people who had their securities in the bank should have got them all back again—every farthing. No; I tell you the most infamous crime a man can commit is to misuse a friend's letters; to publish to all the world what has been confided to him alone, in the closest secrecy, like a whisper in an empty, dark, double-locked room. The man who can do such things is infected and poisoned in every fibre with the morals of the higher rascality. And such a friend was mine—and it was he who crushed me.

FOLDAL.

I can guess whom you mean.

BORKMAN.

There was not a nook or cranny of my life that I hesitated to lay open to him. And then, when the moment

came, he turned against me the weapons I myself had placed in his hands.

FOLDAL.

I have never been able to understand why he—— Of course, there were whispers of all sorts at the time.

BORKMAN.

What were the whispers? Tell me. You see I know nothing. For I had to go straight into—into isolation. What did people whisper, Vilhelm?

FOLDAL.

You were to have gone into the Cabinet, they said.

BORKMAN.

I was offered a portfolio, but I refused it.

FOLDAL.

Then it wasn't there you stood in his way?

BORKMAN.

Oh, no; that was not the reason he betrayed me.

FOLDAL.

Then I really can't understand——

BORKMAN.

I may as well tell you, Vilhelm——

FOLDAL.

Well?

BORKMAN.

There was—in fact, there was a woman in the case.

FOLDAL.

A woman in the case? Well but, John Gabriel——

BORKMAN.

[*Interrupting.*] Well, well—let us say no more of these stupid old stories. After all, neither of us got into the Cabinet, neither he nor I.

FOLDAL.

But he rose high in the world.

BORKMAN.

And I fell into the abyss.

FOLDAL.

Oh, it's a terrible tragedy——

BORKMAN.

[*Nodding to him.*] Almost as terrible as yours, I fancy, when I come to think of it.

FOLDAL.

[*Naïvely.*] Yes, at least as terrible.

BORKMAN.

[*Laughing quietly.*] But looked at from another point of view, it is really a sort of comedy as well.

FOLDAL.

A comedy? The story of your life?

BORKMAN.

Yes, it seems to be taking a turn in that direction. For let me tell you——

FOLDAL.

What?

BORKMAN.

You say you did not meet Frida as you came in?

FOLDAL.

No.

BORKMAN.

At this moment, as we sit here, she is playing waltzes for the guests of the man who betrayed and ruined me.

FOLDAL.

I hadn't the least idea of that.

BORKMAN.

Yes, she took her music, and went straight from me to —to the great house.

FOLDAL.

[*Apologetically.*] Well, you see, poor child——

BORKMAN.

And can you guess for whom she is playing—among the rest?

FOLDAL.

No.

BORKMAN.

For my son.

FOLDAL.

What?

BORKMAN.

What do you think of that, Vilhelm? My son is down there in the whirl of the dance this evening. Am I not right in calling it a comedy?

FOLDAL.

But in that case you may be sure he knows nothing about it.

BORKMAN.

What does he not know?

FOLDAL.

You may be sure he doesn't know how he—that man——

BORKMAN.

Do not shrink from his name. I can quite well bear it now.

FOLDAL.

I'm certain your son doesn't know the circumstances, John Gabriel.

BORKMAN.

[*Gloomily, sitting and beating the table.*] Yes, he knows, as surely as I am sitting here.

A comedy? T

Yes, it seem
For let me tell

What?

You say

No.

At t
for t

FOLDAL.

them!

BORKMAN.

Can you tell me of a single one that is good

?

FOLDAL.

t is the trouble. The few that I know are nothing.

BORKMAN.

a snort of scorn.] Well then, what is the good What is the good of such women existing—if you ow them?

FOLDAL.

mly.] Yes, John Gabriel, there is good in it, I you. It is such a blessed, beneficent thought that r there in the world, somewhere, far away—the oman exists after all.

BORKMAN.

loving impatiently on the sofa.] Oh, do spare me poetical nonsense.

FOLDAL.

Looks at him, deeply wounded.] Do you call my holiest ith poetical nonsense?

BORKMAN.

[*Harshly.*] Yes I do! That is what has always prevented you from getting on in the world. If you would

get all that out of your head, I could still help you on in life—help you to rise.

FOLDAL.

[*Boiling inwardly.*] Oh, you can't do that.

BORKMAN.

I c a n, when once I come into power again.

FOLDAL.

That won't be for many a day.

BORKMAN.

[*Vehemently.*] Perhaps you think that day will never come? Answer me!

FOLDAL.

I don't know what to answer.

BORKMAN.

[*Rising, cold and dignified, and waving his hand towards the door.*] Then I no longer have any use for you.

FOLDAL.

[*Starting up.*] No use——!

BORKMAN.

Since you do not believe that the tide will turn for m e——

FOLDAL.

How c a n I believe in the teeth of all reason? You would have to be legally rehabilitated——

BORKMAN.

Go on! go on!

FOLDAL.

It's true I never passed my examination; but I have read enough law to know that——

BORKMAN.

[*Quickly.*] It is impossible, you mean?

FOLDAL.

There is no precedent for such a thing.

BORKMAN.

Exceptional men are above precedents.

FOLDAL.

The law knows nothing of such distinctions.

BORKMAN.

[*Harshly and decisively.*] You are no poet, Vilhelm.

FOLDAL.

[*Unconsciously folding his hands.*] Do you say that in sober earnest?

BORKMAN.

[*Dismissing the subject, without answering.*] We are only wasting each other's time. You had better not come here again.

[illegible]

[illegible] any use [illegible]

[illegible] I daresay not.

[illegible]

Here [illegible] me all the time.

[illegible]

[illegible] John Gabriel.

[illegible]

Even [illegible] feeding me with hope, and trust, and [illegible]—that was all a lie?

[illegible]

It was a lie so long as you believed in my vocation. So long as you believed in me, I believed in you.

FOREMAN.

Then we have been all the time deceiving each other. And perhaps deceiving ourselves—both of us.

FOLDAL.

But isn't that just the essence of friendship, John Gabriel?

BORKMAN.

[*Smiling bitterly.*] Yes, you are right there. Friendship means—deception. I have learnt that once before.

FOLDAL.

[*Looking at him.*] I have no poetic vocation! And you could actually say it to me so bluntly.

BORKMAN.

[*In a gentler tone.*] Well, you know, I don't pretend to know much about these matters.

FOLDAL.

Perhaps you know more than you think.

BORKMAN.

I?

FOLDAL.

[*Softly.*] Yes, you. For I myself have had my doubts, now and then, I may tell you. The horrible doubt that I may have bungled my life for the sake of a delusion.

BORKMAN.

If you have no faith in yourself, you are on the downward path indeed.

FOLDAL.

That was why I found such comfort in coming here to lean upon your faith in me. [*Taking his hat.*] But now you have become a stranger to me.

BORKMAN.

And run to me.

FOLDAL.

Good night, John Gabriel.

BORKMAN.

Good night, Vilhelm. [FOLDAL *goes out to the left.*
[BORKMAN *stands for a moment gazing at the closed door; makes a movement as though to call* FOLDAL *back, but changes his mind, and begins to pace the floor with his hands behind his back. Then he stops at the table beside the sofa and puts out the lamp. The room becomes half dark. After a short pause, there comes a knock at the tapestry door.*

BORKMAN.

[*At the table, starts, turns, and asks in a loud voice:*] Who is that knocking? [*No answer; another knock.*

BORKMAN.

[*Without moving.*] Who is it? Come in!
[ELLA RENTHEIM, *with a lighted candle in her hand, appears in the doorway. She wears her black dress, as before, with her cloak thrown loosely round her shoulders.*

BORKMAN.

[*Staring at her.*] Who are you? What do you want with me?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Closes the door and advances.*] It is I, Borkman.
[*She puts down the candle on the piano and remains standing beside it.*

BORKMAN.

[*Stands as though thunderstruck, stares fixedly at her, and says in a half-whisper.*] Is it—is it Ella? Is it Ella Rentheim?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, it's "your" Ella, as you used to call me in the old days; many, many years ago.

BORKMAN.

[*As before.*] Yes, it is you, Ella, I can see you now.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Can you recognise me?

BORKMAN.

Yes, now I begin to——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

The years have told on me, and brought winter with them, Borkman. Do you not think so?

BORKMAN.

[*In a forced voice.*] You are a good deal changed—just at the first glance.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

There are no dark curls on my neck now—the curls you once loved so to twist round your fingers.

BORKMAN.

[*Quickly.*] True! I can see now, Ella, you have done your hair differently.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With a sad smile.*] Precisely; it is the way I do my hair that makes the difference.

BORKMAN.

[*Changing the subject.*] I had no idea that you were in this part of the world.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I have only just arrived.

BORKMAN.

Why have you come all this way now, in winter?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

That you shall hear.

BORKMAN.

Is it me you have come to see?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

You among others. But if I am to tell you my errand, I must begin far back.

BORKMAN.

You look tired.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, I am tired.

BORKMAN.

Won't you sit down? There, on the sofa.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, thank you; I need rest.

[*She crosses to the right and seats herself in the furthest forward corner of the sofa.* BORKMAN *stands beside the table with his hands behind his back looking at her. A short silence.*

ELLA RENTHEIM.

It seems an endless time since we two met, Borkman, face to face.

BORKMAN.

[*Gloomily.*] It is a long, long time. And terrible things have passed since then.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

A whole lifetime has passed—a wasted lifetime.

BORKMAN.

[*Looking keenly at her.*] Wasted!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, I say wasted—for both of us.

BORKMAN.

[*In a cold, business tone.*] I cannot regard my life as wasted, yet.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

And what about mine?

BORKMAN.

There you have yourself to blame, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With a start.*] And you can say t h a t ?

BORKMAN.

You could quite well have been happy without me.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Do you believe that?

BORKMAN.

If you had made up your mind to.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Bitterly.*] Oh yes, I know well enough there was some one else ready to marry me.

BORKMAN.

But you rejected him.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, I did.

BORKMAN.

Time after time you rejected him. Year after year——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Scornfully.*] Year after year I rejected happiness, I suppose you think?

BORKMAN.

You might perfectly well have been happy with h i m. And then I should have been saved.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

You?

BORKMAN.

Yes, you would have saved me, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

How do you mean?

BORKMAN.

He thought I was at the bottom of your obstinacy —of your perpetual refusals. And then he took his revenge. It was so easy for him; he had all my frank, confiding letters in his keeping. He made his own use of them; and then it was all over with me—for the time, that is to say. So you see it is all your doing, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh indeed, Borkman. If we look into the matter, it appears that it is I who owe y o u reparation.

BORKMAN.

It depends how you look at it. I know quite well all that you have done for us. You bought in this house, and the whole property, at the auction. You placed the house entirely at my disposal—and your sister's. You took charge of Erhart, and cared for him in every way——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

As long as I was allowed to——

BORKMAN.

By your sister, you mean. I have never mixed myself up in these domestic affairs. As I was saying, I know all the sacrifices you have made for me and for your sister. But you were in a position to do so, Ella; and you must not forget that it was I who placed you in that position.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Indignantly.*] There you make a great mistake, Borkman! It was the love of my inmost heart for Erhart—and for you too—that made me do it!

BORKMAN.

[*Interrupting.*] My dear Ella, do not let us get upon questions of sentiment and that sort of thing. I mean, of course, that if you acted generously, it was I that put it in your power to do so.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Smiling.*] H'm! In my power——

BORKMAN.

[*Warmly.*] Yes, put it in your power, I say! On the eve of the great decisive battle—when I could not afford to spare either kith or kin—when I had to grasp at—when I d i d grasp at the millions that were entrusted to me—then I spared all that was yours, every farthing, although I could have taken it, and made use of it, as I did of all the rest!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Coldly and quietly.*] That is quite true, Borkman.

BORKMAN.

Yes it is. And that was why, when they came and took me, they found all your securities untouched in the strong-room of the bank.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking at him.*] I have often and often wondered what was your real reason for sparing all my property? That, and that alone?

BORKMAN.

My reason?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, your reason. Tell me.

BORKMAN.

[*Harshly and scornfully.*] Perhaps you think it was that I might have something to fall back upon, if things went wrong?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh no, I am sure you did not think of that in those days.

BORKMAN.

Never! I was so absolutely certain of victory.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Well then, why was it that——?

BORKMAN.

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Upon my soul, Ella, it is not so easy to remember one's motives of twenty years ago. I only know that when I used to grapple, silently and alone, with all the great projects I had in my mind, I had something like the feeling of a man who is starting on a balloon-voyage. All through my sleepless nights I was inflating my giant balloon, and preparing to soar away into perilous, unknown regions.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Smiling.*] You, who never had the least doubt of victory?

BORKMAN.

[*Impatiently.*] Men are made so, Ella. They both doubt and believe at the same time. [*Looking straight before him.*] And I suppose that was why I would not take you and yours with me in the balloon.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Eagerly.*] Why, I ask you? Tell me why!

BORKMAN.

[*Without looking at her.*] One shrinks from risking what one holds dearest on such a voyage.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

You had risked what was dearest to you on that voyage. Your whole future life——

BORKMAN.

Life is not always what one holds dearest.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Breathlessly.*] Was that how you felt at that time?

BORKMAN.

I fancy it was.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I was the dearest thing in the world to you?

BORKMAN.

I seem to remember something of the sort.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

And yet years and years had passed since you had deserted me—and married—married another!

BORKMAN.

Deserted you, you say? You must know very well that it was higher motives—well then, o t h e r motives that compelled me. Without h i s support I could not have done anything.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Controlling herself.*] So you deserted me from—higher motives.

BORKMAN.

I could not get on without his help. And he made you the price of helping me.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

And you paid the price. Paid it in full—without haggling.

BORKMAN.

I had no choice. I had to conquer or fall.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*In a trembling voice, looking at him.*] Can what you tell me be true—that I was then the dearest thing in the world to you?

BORKMAN.

Both then and afterwards—long, long after.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

But you bartered me away none the less; drove a bargain with another man for your love. Sold my love for a—for a directorship.

BORKMAN.

[*Gloomily and bowed down.*] I was driven by inexorable necessity, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Rises from the sofa, quivering with passion.*] Criminal!

BORKMAN.

[*Starts, but controls himself.*] I have heard that word before.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh, don't imagine I'm thinking of anything you may have done against the law of the land! The use you made of all those vouchers and securities, or whatever you call them—do you think I care a straw about that! If I could have stood at your side when the crash came——

BORKMAN.

[*Eagerly.*] What then, Ella?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Trust me, I should have borne it all so gladly along with you. The shame, the ruin—I would have helped you to bear it all—all!

BORKMAN.

Would you have had the will—the strength?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Both the will and the strength. For then I did not know of your great, your terrible crime.

BORKMAN.

What crime? What are you speaking of?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I am speaking of that crime for which there is no forgiveness.

BORKMAN.

[*Staring at her.*] You must be out of your mind,

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Approaching him.*] You are a murderer! You have committed the one mortal sin!

BORKMAN.

[*Falling back towards the piano.*] You are raving, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

You have killed the love-life in me. [*Still nearer him.*] Do you understand what that means? The Bible speaks of a mysterious sin for which there is no forgiveness. I have never understood what it could be; but now I understand. The great, unpardonable sin is to murder the love-life in a human soul.

BORKMAN.

And you say I have done that?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

You h a v e done that. I have never rightly understood until this evening what had really happened to me. That you deserted me and turned to Gunhild instead—I took that to be mere common fickleness on your part, and the result of heartless scheming on hers. I almost think I despised you a little, in spite of everything. But now I see it! You deserted the woman you l o v e d! Me, me, me! What you held dearest in the world you were ready to barter away for gain. T h a t is the double murder you have committed! The murder of your own soul and of mine!

BORKMAN.

[*With cold self-control.*] How well I recognise your passionate, ungovernable spirit, Ella. No doubt it is natural enough that you should look at the thing in this light. Of course, you are a woman, and therefore it would seem that your own heart is the one thing you know or care about in the world.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, yes it is.

BORKMAN.

Your own heart is the only thing that exists for you.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

The only thing! The only thing! You are right there.

BORKMAN.

But you must remember that I am a man. As a woman, you were the dearest thing in the world to me. But if the worst comes to the worst, one woman can always take the place of another.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looks at him with a smile.*] Was that your experience when you had made Gunhild your wife?

BORKMAN.

No. But the great aims I had in life helped me to bear even that. I wanted to have at my command all the sources of power in this country. All the wealth that lay hidden in the soil, and the rocks, and the forests, and the sea— I wanted to gather it all into my

hands, to make myself master of it all, and so to promote the well-being of many, many thousands.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Lost in recollection.*] I know it. Think of all the evenings we spent in talking over your projects.

BORKMAN.

Yes, I could talk to y o u, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I jested with your plans, and asked whether you wanted to awaken all the sleeping spirits of the mine.

BORKMAN.

[*Nodding.*] I remember that phrase. [*Slowly.*] All the sleeping spirits of the mine.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

But you did not take it as a jest. You said: "Yes, yes, Ella, that is just what I want to do."

BORKMAN.

And so it was. If only I could get my foot into the stirrup—— And t h a t depended on that one man. He could and would secure me the control of the bank—if I on my side——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, just so! If you on your side would renounce the woman you loved—and who loved you beyond words in return.

BORKMAN.

I knew his consuming passion for you. I knew that on no other condition would he——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

And so you struck the bargain.

BORKMAN.

[*Vehemently.*] Yes, I did, Ella! For the love of power is uncontrollable in me, you see! So I struck the bargain; I had to. And he helped me half-way up towards the beckoning heights that I was bent on reaching. And I mounted and mounted; year by year I mounted——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

And I was as though wiped out of your life.

BORKMAN.

And after all he hurled me into the abyss again. On account of you, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*After a short thoughtful silence.*] Borkman, does it not seem to you as if there had been a sort of curse on our whole relation?

BORKMAN.

[*Looking at her.*] A curse?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes. Don't you think so?

BORKMAN.

[*Uneasily.*] Yes. But why is it? [*With an outburst.*] Oh Ella, I begin to wonder which is in the right—you or I!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

It is you who have sinned. You have done to death all the gladness of life in me.

BORKMAN.

[*Anxiously.*] Do not say that, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

All a woman's gladness at any rate. From the day when your image began to dwindle in my mind, I have lived my life as though under an eclipse. During all these years it has grown harder and harder for me—and at last utterly impossible—to love any living creature. Human beings, animals, plants: I shrank from all—from all but one——

BORKMAN.

What one?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Erhart, of course.

BORKMAN.

Erhart?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Erhart—your son, Borkman.

BORKMAN.

Has he really been so close to your heart?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Why else should I have taken him to me, and kept him as long as ever I could? Why?

BORKMAN.

I thought it was out of pity, like all the rest that you did.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*In strong inward emotion.*] Pity! Ha, ha! I have never known pity, since you deserted me. I was incapable of feeling it. If a poor starved child came into my kitchen, shivering, and crying, and begging for a morsel of food, I let the servants look to it. I never felt any desire to take the child to myself, to warm it at my own hearth, to have the pleasure of seeing it eat and be satisfied. And yet I was not like that when I was young; that I remember clearly! It is you that have created an empty, barren desert within me—and without me too!

BORKMAN.

Except only for Erhart.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, except for your son. But I am hardened to every other living thing. You have cheated me of a mother's joy and happiness in life—and of a mother's sorrows and tears as well. And perhaps that is the heaviest part of the loss to me.

BORKMAN.

Do you say that, Ella?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Who knows? It may be that a mother's sorrows and tears were what I needed most. [*With still deeper emotion.*] But at that time I could not resign myself to my loss; and that was why I took Erhart to me. I won him entirely. Won his whole warm, trustful childish heart—until—— Oh!

BORKMAN.

Until what?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Until his mother—his mother in the flesh, I mean—took him from me again.

BORKMAN.

He had to leave you in any case; he had to come to town.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Wringing her hands.*] Yes, but I cannot bear the solitude—the emptiness! I cannot bear the loss of your son's heart!

BORKMAN.

[*With an evil expression in his eyes.*] H'm—I doubt whether you have lost it, Ella. Hearts are not so easily lost to a certain person—in the room below.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I have lost Erhart here, and she has won him back again. Or if not she, some one else. That is plain enough in the letters he writes me from time to time.

BORKMAN.

Then it is to take him back with you that you have come here?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, if only it were possible——!

BORKMAN.

It is possible enough, if you have set your heart upon it. For you have the first and strongest claims upon him.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh, claims, claims! What is the use of claims? If he is not mine of his own free will, he is not mine at all. And have him I must! I must have my boy's heart, whole and undivided—now!

BORKMAN.

You must remember that Erhart is well into his twenties. You could scarcely reckon on keeping his heart very long undivided, as you express it.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With a melancholy smile.*] It would not need to be for so very long.

BORKMAN.

Indeed? I should have thought that when y o u want a thing, you want it to the end of your days.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

So I do. But that need not mean for very long.

BORKMAN.

[*Taken aback.*] What do you mean by that?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I suppose you know I have been in bad health for many years past?

BORKMAN.

Have y o u?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Do you not know that?

BORKMAN.

No, I cannot say I did——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking at him in surprise.*] Has Erhart not told you so?

BORKMAN.

I really don't remember at the moment.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Perhaps he has not spoken of me at all?

BORKMAN.

Oh, yes, I believe he has spoken of you. But the fact is, I so seldom see anything of him—scarcely ever. There is a certain person below that keeps him away from me. Keeps him away, you understand?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Are you quite sure of that, Borkman?

BORKMAN.

Yes, absolutely sure. [*Changing his tone.*] And so you have been in bad health, Ella?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, I have. And this autumn I grew so much worse that I had to come to town and take better medical advice.

BORKMAN.

And you have seen the doctors already?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, this morning.

BORKMAN.

And what did they say to you?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

They gave me full assurance of what I had long suspected.

BORKMAN.

Well?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Calmly and quietly.*] My illness will never be cured, Borkman.

BORKMAN.

Oh, you must not believe that, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

It is a disease that there is no help or cure for. The doctors can do nothing with it. They must just let it take its course. They cannot possibly check it; at most, they can allay the suffering. And that is always something.

BORKMAN.

Oh, but it will take a long time to run its course. I am sure it will.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I may perhaps last out the winter, they told me.

BORKMAN.

[*Without thinking.*] Oh, well, the winter is long.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Quietly.*] Long enough for me, at any rate.

BORKMAN.

[*Eagerly, changing the subject.*] But what in all the world can have brought on this illness? You, who have always lived such a healthy and regular life? What can have brought it on?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking at him.*] The doctors thought that perhaps at one time in my life I had had to go through some great stress of emotion.

BORKMAN.

[*Firing up.*] Emotion! Aha, I understand! You mean that it is my fault?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With increasing inward agitation.*] It is too late to go into that matter now! But I must have my heart's own child again before I go! It is so unspeakably sad for me to think that I must go away from all that is called life—away from sun, and light, and air—and not leave behind me one single human being who will think of me—who will remember me lovingly and mournfully—as a son remembers and thinks of the mother he has lost.

BORKMAN.

[*After a short pause.*] Take him, Ella, if you can win him.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With animation.*] Do you give your consent? C a n you?

BORKMAN.

[*Gloomily.*] Yes. And it is no great sacrifice either. For in any case he is not mine.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Thank you, thank you all the same for the sacrifice! But I have one thing more to beg of you—a great thing for me, Borkman.

BORKMAN.

Well, what is it?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I daresay you will think it childish of me—you will not understand——

BORKMAN.

Go on—tell me what it is.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

When I die—as I must soon—I shall have a fair amount to leave behind me.

BORKMAN.

Yes, I suppose so.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

And I intend to leave it all to Erhart.

BORKMAN.

Well, you have really no one nearer to you than he.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Warmly.*] No indeed, I have no one nearer me than he.

BORKMAN.

No one of your own family. You are the last.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Nodding slowly.*] Yes, that is just it. When I die, the name of Rentheim dies with me. And that is such a torturing thought to me. To be wiped out of existence—even to your very name——

BORKMAN.

[*Firing up.*] Ah, I see what you are driving at!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Passionately.*] Do not let this be my forte. Let Erhart bear my name after me!

BORKMAN.

[*Looking harshly at her.*] I understand you well enough. You want to save my son from having to bear his father's name. That is your meaning.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

No, no, not that! I myself would have borne it proudly and gladly along with you! But a mother who is at the point of death—— There is more binding force in a name than you think or believe, Borkman.

BORKMAN.

[*Coldly and proudly.*] Well and good, Ella. I am man enough to bear my own name alone.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Seizing and pressing his hand.*] Thank you, thank you! Now there has been a full settlement between us! Yes, yes, let it be so! You have made all the atonement in your power. For when I have gone from the world, I shall leave Erhart Rentheim behind me!

[*The tapestry door is thrown open.* MRS. BORKMAN, *with the large shawl over her head, stands in the doorway.*

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*In violent agitation.*] Never to his dying day shall Erhart be called by that name!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Shrinking back.*] Gunhild!

BORKMAN.

[*Harshly and threateningly.*] I allow no one to come up to my room!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Advancing a step.*] I do not ask your permission.

BORKMAN.

[*Going towards her.*] What do you want with me?

MRS. BORKMAN.

I will fight with all my might for you. I will protect you from the powers of evil.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

The worst "powers of evil" are in yourself, Gunhild!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Harshly.*] So be it then. [*Menacingly, with up-stretched arm.*] But this I tell you—he shall bear his father's name! And bear it aloft in honour again. And I will be his mother! I alone! My son's heart shall be mine—mine, and no other's.

[*She goes out by the tapestry door and shuts it behind her.*

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Shaken and shattered.*] Borkman, Erhart's life will be wrecked in this storm. There must be an understanding between you and Gunhild. We must go down to her at once.

BORKMAN.

[*Looking at her.*] We? I too, do you mean?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Both you and I.

BORKMAN.

[*Shaking his head.*] She is hard, I tell you. Hard as the metal I once dreamed of hewing out of the rocks.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Then try it now!

[BORKMAN *does not answer, but stands looking doubtfully at her.*

ACT THIRD

MRS. BORKMAN'S *Drawing-room. The lamp is still burning on the table beside the sofa in front. The garden-room at the back is quite dark.*

MRS. BORKMAN, *with the shawl still over her head, enters, in violent agitation, by the hall door, goes up to the window, draws the curtain a little aside, and looks out; then she seats herself beside the stove, but immediately springs up again, goes to the bell-pull and rings. Stands beside the sofa, and waits a moment. No one comes. Then she rings again, this time more violently.*

THE MAID *presently enters from the hall. She looks sleepy and out of temper, and appears to have dressed in great haste.*

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Impatiently.*] What has become of you, Malena? I have rung for you twice!

THE MAID.

Yes, ma'am, I heard you.

MRS. BORKMAN.

And yet you didn't come?

THE MAID.

[*Sulkily.*] I had to put some clothes on first, I suppose.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, you must dress yourself properly, and then you must run at once and fetch my son.

THE MAID.

[*Looking at her in astonishment.*] You want me to fetch Mr. Erhart?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes; tell him he must come home to me at once; I want to speak to him.

THE MAID.

[*Grumbling.*] Then I'd better go to the bailiff's and call up the coachman.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Why?

THE MAID.

To get him to harness the sledge. The snow's dreadful to-night.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Oh, that doesn't matter; only make haste and go. It's just round the corner.

THE MAID.

Why ma'am, you can't call that just round the corner!

MRS. BORKMAN.

Of course it is. Don't you know Mr. Hinkel's villa?

THE MAID.

[*With malice.*] Oh, indeed! It's there Mr. Erhart is this evening?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Taken aback.*] Why, where else should he be?

THE MAID.

[*With a slight smile.*] Well, I only thought he might be where he usually is.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Where do you mean?

THE MAID.

At that Mrs. Wilton's, as they call her.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Mrs. Wilton's? My son isn't so often there.

THE MAID.

[*Half muttering.*] I've heard say as he's there every day of his life.

MRS. BORKMAN.

That's all nonsense, Malena. Go straight to Mr. Hinkel's and try to get hold of him.

THE MAID.

[*With a toss of her head.*] Oh, very well; I'm going.

[*She is on the point of going out by the hall, but just at that moment the hall door is opened, and* ELLA RENTHEIM *and* BORKMAN *appear on the threshold.*

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Staggers a step backwards.*] What does this mean?

THE MAID.

[*Terrified, instinctively folding her hands.*] Lord save us!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Whispers to* THE MAID.] Tell him he must come this instant.

THE MAID.

[*Softly.*] Yes, ma'am.

[ELLA RENTHEIM *and, after her,* BORKMAN *enter the room.* THE MAID *sidles behind them to the door, goes out, and closes it after her. A short silence.*

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Having recovered her self-control, turns to* ELLA.] What does he want down here in my room?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

He wants to come to an understanding with you, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN.

He has never tried that before.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

He is going to, this evening.

MRS. BORKMAN.

The last time we stood face to face—it was in the Court, when I was summoned to give an account——

BORKMAN.

[*Approaching.*] And this evening it is *I* who will give an account of myself.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking at him.*] You?

BORKMAN.

Not of what I have done amiss. All the world knows that.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a bitter sigh.*] Yes, that is true; all the world knows that.

BORKMAN.

But it does not know w h y I did it; why I h a d to do it. People do not understand that I had to, because I was myself—because I was John Gabriel Borkman—myself, and not another. And that is what I will try to explain to you.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Shaking her head.*] It is of no use. Temptations and promptings acquit no one.

BORKMAN.

They may acquit one in one's own eyes.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a gesture of repulsion.*] Oh, let all that alone! I have thought over that black business of yours enough and to spare.

BORKMAN.

I too. During those five endless years in my cell—and elsewhere—I had time to think it over. And during the eight years up there in the gallery I have had still more ample time. I have re-tried the whole case—by myself. Time after time I have re-tried it. I have been my own accuser, my own defender, and my own judge. I have been more impartial than any one else could be—that I venture to say. I have paced up and down the gallery there, turning every one of my actions upside down and inside out. I have examined them from all sides as unsparingly, as pitilessly, as any lawyer of them all. And the final judgment I have always come to is this: the one person I have sinned against is—myself.

MRS. BORKMAN.

And what about me? What about your son?

BORKMAN.

You and he are included in what I mean when I say myself.

MRS. BORKMAN.

And what about the hundreds of others, then—the people you are said to have ruined?

BORKMAN.

[*More vehemently.*] I had power in my hands! And then I felt the irresistible vocation within me! The pris-

oned millions lay all over the country, deep in the bowels of the earth, calling aloud to me! They shrieked to me to free them! But no one else heard their cry—I alone had ears for it.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, to the branding of the name of Borkman.

BORKMAN.

If the others had had the power, do you think they would not have acted exactly as I did?

MRS. BORKMAN.

No one, no one but you would have done it!

BORKMAN.

Perhaps not. But that would have been because they had not my brains. And if they h a d done it, it would not have been with m y aims in view. The act would have been a different act. In short, I have acquitted myself.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Softly and appealingly.*] Oh, can you say that so confidently, Borkman?

BORKMAN.

[*Nodding.*] Acquitted myself on t h a t score. But then comes the great, crushing self-accusation.

MRS. BORKMAN.

What is that?

BORKMAN.

I have skulked up there and wasted eight precious years of my life! The very day I was set free, I should have gone forth into the world—out into the steel-hard, dreamless world of reality! I should have begun at the bottom and swung myself up to the heights anew—higher than ever before—in spite of all that lay between.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Oh, it would only have been the same thing over again; take my word for that.

BORKMAN.

[*Shakes his head, and looks at her with a sententious air.*] It is true that nothing new happens; but what has happened does not repeat itself either. It is the eye that transforms the action. The eye, born anew, transforms the old action. [*Breaking off.*] But you do not understand this.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Curtly.*] No, I do not understand it.

BORKMAN.

Ah, that is just the curse—I have never found one single soul to understand me.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking at him.*] Never, Borkman?

BORKMAN.

Except one—perhaps. Long, long ago. In the days when I did not think I needed understanding. Since

then, at any rate, no one has understood me! There has been no one alive enough to my needs to be afoot and rouse me—to ring the morning bell for me—to call me up to manful work anew. And to impress upon me that I had done nothing inexpiable.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a scornful laugh.*] So, after all, you require to have t h a t impressed on you from without?

BORKMAN.

[*With increasing indignation.*] Yes, when the whole world hisses in chorus that I have sunk never to rise again, there come moments when I almost believe it myself. [*Raising his head.*] But then my inmost assurance rises again triumphant; and t h a t acquits me.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking harshly at him.*] Why have you never come and asked me for what you call understanding?

BORKMAN.

What use would it have been to come to you?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a gesture of repulsion.*] You have never loved anything outside yourself; t h a t is the secret of the whole matter.

BORKMAN.

[*Proudly.*] I have loved power.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, power!

BORKMAN.

The power to create human happiness in wide, wide circles around me!

MRS. BORKMAN.

You had once the power to make me happy. Have you used it to that end?

BORKMAN.

[*Without looking at her.*] Some one must generally go down in a shipwreck.

MRS. BORKMAN.

And your own son! Have you used your power—have you lived and laboured—to make h i m happy?

BORKMAN.

I do not know him.

MRS. BORKMAN.

No, that is true. You do not even know him.

BORKMAN.

[*Harshly.*] You, his mother, have taken care of that!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking at him with a lofty air.*] Oh, you do not know what I have taken care of!

BORKMAN.

You?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, I. I alone.

BORKMAN.

Then tell me.

MRS. BORKMAN.

I have taken care of your memory.

BORKMAN.

[*With a short dry laugh.*] My memory? Oh, indeed! It sounds almost as if I were dead already.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With emphasis.*] And so you are.

BORKMAN.

[*Slowly.*] Yes, perhaps you are right. [*Firing up.*] But no, no! Not yet! I have been close to the verge of death. But now I have awakened. I have come to myself. A whole life lies before me yet. I can see it awaiting me, radiant and quickening. And you—you shall see it too.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Raising her hand.*] Never dream of life again! Lie quiet where you are.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Shocked.*] Gunhild! Gunhild, how can you——!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Not listening to her.*] I will raise the monument over your grave.

BORKMAN.

The pillar of shame, I suppose you mean?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With increasing excitement.*] Oh, no, it shall be no pillar of metal or stone. And no one shall be suffered to carve any scornful legend on the monument I shall raise. There shall be, as it were, a quickset hedge of trees and bushes, close, close around your tomb. They shall hide away all the darkness that has been. The eyes of men and the thoughts of men shall no longer dwell on John Gabriel Borkman!

BORKMAN.

[*Hoarsely and cuttingly.*] And this labour of love you will perform?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Not by my own strength. I cannot think of that. But I have brought up one to help me, who shall live for this alone. His life shall be so pure and high and bright, that your burrowing in the dark shall be as though it had never been!

BORKMAN.

[*Darkly and threateningly.*] If it is Erhart you mean, say so at once!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking him straight in the eyes.*] Yes, it is Erhart; my son; he whom you are ready to renounce in atonement for your own acts.

BORKMAN.

[*With a look towards* ELLA.] In atonement for my blackest sin.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Repelling the idea.*] A sin towards a stranger only. Remember the sin towards me! [*Looking triumphantly at them both.*] But he will not obey you! When I cry out to him in my need, he will come to me! It is with me that he will remain! With me, and never with any one else. [*Suddenly listens, and cries.*] I hear him! He is here, he is here! Erhart!

[ERHART BORKMAN *hastily tears open the hall door, and enters the room. He is wearing an overcoat and has his hat on.*

ERHART.

[*Pale and anxious.*] Mother! What in Heaven's name——! [*Seeing* BORKMAN, *who is standing beside the doorway leading into the garden-room, he starts and takes off his hat. After a moment's silence, he asks:*] What do you want with me, mother? What has happened?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Stretching out her arms towards him.*] I want to see you, Erhart! I want to have you with me, always!

ERHART.

[*Stammering.*] Have me——? Always? What do you mean by that?

MRS. BORKMAN.

I will have you, I say! There is some one who wants to take you from me!

ERHART.

[*Recoiling a step.*] Ah—so you know?

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes. Do you know it, too?

ERHART.

[*Surprised, looking at her.*] Do *I* know it? Yes, of course.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Aha, so you have planned it all out! Behind my back! Erhart! Erhart!

ERHART.

[*Quickly.*] Mother, tell me what it is you know!

MRS. BORKMAN.

I know everything. I know that your aunt has come here to take you from me.

ERHART.

Aunt Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh, listen to me a moment, Erhart!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Continuing.*] She wants me to give you up to her! She wants to stand in your mother's place to you, Erhart. She wants you to be her son, and not mine, from this time forward. She wants you to inherit everything from her; to renounce your own name and take hers instead!

ERHART.

Aunt Ella, is this true?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, it is true.

ERHART.

I knew nothing of this. Why do you want to have me with you again?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Because I feel that I am losing you here.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Hardly.*] You are losing him to me—yes. And that is just as it should be.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking beseechingly at him.*] Erhart, I cannot afford to lose you. For, I must tell you, I am a lonely—dying woman.

ERHART.

Dying——?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, dying. Will you come and be with me to the end? Attach yourself wholly to me? Be to me, as though you were my own child——?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Interrupting.*] And forsake your mother, and perhaps your mission in life as well? Will you, Erhart?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I am condemned to death. Answer me, Erhart.

ERHART.

[*Warmly, with emotion.*] Aunt Ella, you have been unspeakably good to me. With you I grew up in as perfect happiness as any boy can ever have known——

MRS. BORKMAN.

Erhart, Erhart!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh, how glad I am that you can still say that!

ERHART.

But I cannot sacrifice myself to you now. It is not possible for me to devote myself wholly to taking a son's place towards you.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Triumphing.*] Ah, I knew it! You shall not have him! You shall not have him, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Sadly.*] I see it. You have won him back.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, yes! Mine he is, and mine he shall remain! Erhart, say it is so, dear; we two have still a long way to go together, have we not?

ERHART.

[*Struggling with himself.*] Mother, I may as well tell you plainly——

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Eagerly.*] What?

ERHART.

I am afraid it is only a very little way you and I can go together.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Stands as though thunderstruck.*] What do you mean by that?

ERHART.

[*Plucking up spirit.*] Good heavens, mother, I am young, after all! I feel as if the close air of this room must stifle me in the end.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Close air? Here—with me?

ERHART.

Yes, here with you, mother.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Then come with me, Erhart.

ERHART.

Oh, Aunt Ella, it's not a whit better with you. It's different, but no better—no better for me. It smells of rose-leaves and lavender there too; it is as airless there as here.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Shaken, but having recovered her composure with an effort.*] Airless in your mother's room, you say!

ERHART.

[*In growing impatience.*] Yes, I don't know how else to express it. All this morbid watchfulness and—and idolisation, or whatever you like to call it—— I can't endure it any longer!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking at him with deep solemnity.*] Have you forgotten what you have consecrated your life to, Erhart?

ERHART.

[*With an outburst.*] Oh, say rather what y o u have consecrated my life to. You, you have been my will. You have never given me leave to have any of my own. But now I cannot bear this yoke any longer. I am young; remember that, mother. [*With a polite, considerate glance towards* BORKMAN.] I cannot consecrate my life to making atonement for another—whoever that other may be.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Seized with a growing anxiety.*] Who is it that has transformed you, Erhart?

ERHART.

[*Struck.*] Who? Can you not conceive that it is I myself?

MRS. BORKMAN.

No, no, no! You have come under some strange power. You are not in your mother's power any longer; nor in your—your foster-mother's either.

ERHART.

[*With laboured defiance.*] I am in my own power, mother! And working my own will!

BORKMAN.

[*Advancing towards* ERHART.] Then perhaps my hour has come at last.

ERHART.

[*Distantly and with measured politeness.*] How so? How do you mean, sir?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Scornfully.*] Yes, you may well ask that.

BORKMAN.

[*Continuing undisturbed.*] Listen, Erhart—will you not cast in your lot with your father? It is not through any

other man's life that a man who has fallen can be raised up again. These are only empty fables that have been told to you down here in the airless room. If you were to set yourself to live your life like all the saints together, it would be of no use whatever to me.

ERHART.

[*With measured respectfulness.*] That is very true indeed.

BORKMAN.

Yes, it is. And it would be of no use either if I should resign myself to wither away in abject penitence. I have tried to feed myself upon hopes and dreams, all through these years. But I am not the man to be content with that; and now I mean to have done with dreaming.

ERHART.

[*With a slight bow.*] And what will—what will you do, sir?

BORKMAN.

I will work out my own redemption, that is what I will do. I will begin at the bottom again. It is only through his present and his future that a man can atone for his past. Through work, indefatigable work, for all that, in my youth, seemed to give life its meaning—and that now seems a thousand times greater than it did then. Erhart, will you join with me and help me in this new life?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Raising her hand warningly.*] Do not do it, Erhart!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Warmly.*] Yes, yes, do it! Oh, help him, Erhart!

MRS. BORKMAN.

And you advise him to do that? You, the lonely, dying woman.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I don't care about myself.

MRS. BORKMAN.

No, so long as it is not I that take him from you.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Precisely so, Gunhild.

BORKMAN.

Will you, Erhart?

ERHART.

[*Wrung with pain.*] Father, I cannot now. It is utterly impossible!

BORKMAN.

What do you want to do then?

ERHART.

[*With a sudden glow.*] I am young! I want to live, for once in a way, as well as other people! I want to live my own life!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

You cannot give up two or three little months to brighten the close of a poor waning life?

ERHART.

I c a n n o t, Aunt, however much I may wish to.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Not for the sake of one who loves you so dearly?

ERHART.

I solemnly assure you, Aunt Ella, I cannot.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking sharply at him.*] And your mother has no power over you either, any more?

ERHART.

I will always love you, mother; but I cannot go on living for you alone. This is no life for me.

BORKMAN.

Then come and join with me, after all! For life, life means work, Erhart. Come, we two will go forth into life and work together!

ERHART.

[*Passionately.*] Yes, but I don't w a n t to work now! For I am y o u n g! That's what I never realised before; but now the knowledge is tingling through every

vein in my body. I will not work! I will only live, live, live!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a cry of divination.*] Erhart, what will you live for?

ERHART.

[*With sparkling eyes.*] For happiness, mother!

MRS. BORKMAN.

And where do you think you can find that?

ERHART.

I h a v e found it, already!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Shrieks.*] Erhart!

[ERHART *goes quickly to the hall door and throws it open.*

ERHART.

[*Calls out.*] Fanny, you can come in now!

[MRS. WILTON, *in outdoor wraps, appears on the threshold.*

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With uplifted hands.*] Mrs. Wilton!

MRS. WILTON.

[*Hesitating a little, with an enquiring glance at* ERHART.] Do you want me to——?

ERHART.

Yes, now you can come in. I have told them everything.

[MRS. WILTON *comes forward into the room.* ERHART *closes the door behind her. She bows formally to* BORKMAN, *who returns her bow in silence. A short pause.*

MRS. WILTON.

[*In a subdued but firm voice.*] So the word has been spoken—and I suppose you all think I have brought a great calamity upon this house?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Slowly, looking hard at her.*] You have crushed the last remnant of interest in life for me. [*With an outburst.*] But all this—all this is utterly impossible!

MRS. WILTON.

I can quite understand that it must appear impossible to you, Mrs. Borkman.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, you can surely see for yourself that it is impossible. Or what——?

MRS. WILTON.

I should rather say that it seems highly improbable. But it's so, none the less.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Turning.*] Are you really in earnest about this, Erhart?

ERHART.

This means happiness for me, mother—all the beauty and happiness of life. That is all I can say to you.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Clenching her hands together; to* MRS. WILTON.] Oh, how you have cajoled and deluded my unhappy son!

MRS. WILTON.

[*Raising her head proudly.*] I have done nothing of the sort.

MRS. BORKMAN.

You have not, you say!

MRS. WILTON.

No. I have neither cajoled nor deluded him. Erhart came to me of his own free will. And of my own free will I went out half-way to meet him.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Measuring her scornfully with her eye.*] Yes, indeed! That I can easily believe.

MRS. WILTON.

[*With self-control.*] Mrs. Borkman, there are forces in human life that you seem to know very little about.

MRS. BORKMAN.

What forces, may I ask?

MRS. WILTON.

The forces which ordain that two people shall join their lives together, indissolubly—and fearlessly.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a smile.*] I thought you were already indissolubly bound—to another.

MRS. WILTON.

[*Shortly.*] That other has deserted me.

MRS. BORKMAN.

But he is still living, they say.

MRS. WILTON.

He's dead to me.

ERHART.

[*Insistently.*] Yes, mother, he is dead to Fanny. And besides, this other makes no difference to me!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking sternly at him.*] So you know all this—about the other.

ERHART.

Yes, mother, I know quite well—all about it!

MRS. BORKMAN.

And yet you can say that it makes no difference to you?

ERHART.

[*With defiant petulance.*] I can only tell you that it is happiness I must have! I am young! I want to live, live, live!

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, you are young, Erhart. Too young for this.

MRS. WILTON.

[*Firmly and earnestly.*] You must not think, Mrs. Borkman, that I haven't said the same to him. I have laid my whole life before him. Again and again I have reminded him that I am seven years older than he——

ERHART.

[*Interrupting.*] Oh nonsense, Fanny—I knew that all the time.

MRS. WILTON.

But nothing—nothing was of any use.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Indeed? Nothing? Then why did you not dismiss him without more ado? Close your door to him? You should have done that, and done it in time!

MRS. WILTON.

[*Looks at her, and says in a low voice.*] I could not do that, Mrs. Borkman.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Why could you not?

MRS. WILTON.

Because for me too this meant happiness.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Scornfully.*] H'm, happiness, happiness——

MRS. WILTON.

I have never before known happiness in life. And I cannot possibly drive happiness away from me, merely because it comes so late.

MRS. BORKMAN.

And how long do you think this happiness will last?

ERHART.

[*Interrupting.*] Whether it lasts or does not last, mother, it doesn't matter now!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*In anger.*] Blind boy that you are! Do you not see where all this is leading you?

ERHART.

I don't want to look into the future. I don't want to look around me in any direction; I am only determined to live my own life—at last!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With deep pain.*] And you call this life, Erhart!

ERHART.

Don't you see how lovely she is!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Wringing her hands.*] And I have to bear this load of shame as well!

BORKMAN.

[*At the back, harshly and cuttingly.*] Ho—you are used to bearing things of that sort, Gunhild!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Imploringly.*] Borkman!

ERHART.

[*Similarly.*] Father!

MRS. BORKMAN.

Day after day I shall have to see my own son linked to a—a——

ERHART.

[*Interrupting her harshly.*] You shall see nothing of the kind, mother! You may make your mind easy on that point. I shall not remain here.

MRS. WILTON.

[*Quickly and with decision.*] We are going away, Mrs. Borkman.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Turning pale.*] Are you going away, too? Together, no doubt?

MRS. WILTON.

[*Nodding.*] Yes, I am going abroad, to the South. I am taking a young girl with me. And Erhart is going along with us.

MRS. BORKMAN.

W i t h you—and a young girl?

MRS. WILTON.

Yes. It is little Frida Foldal, whom I have had living with me. I want her to go abroad and get more instruction in music.

MRS. BORKMAN.

So you are taking her with you?

MRS. WILTON.

Yes; I can't well send her out into the world alone.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Suppressing a smile.*] What do y o u say to this, Erhart?

ERHART.

[*With some embarrassment, shrugging his shoulders.*] Well, mother, since Fanny will have it so——

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Coldly.*] And when does this distinguished party set out, if one may ask?

MRS. WILTON.

We are going at once—to-night. My covered sledge is waiting on the road, outside the Hinkels'.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looking her over from head to foot.*] Aha! so that was what the party meant?

MRS. WILTON.

[*Smiling.*] Yes, Erhart and I were the whole party. And little Frida, of course.

MRS. BORKMAN.

And where is she now?

MRS. WILTON.

She is sitting in the sledge waiting for us.

ERHART.

[*In painful embarrassment.*] Mother, surely you can understand? I would have spared you all this—you and every one.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Looks at him, deeply pained.*] You would have gone away from me without saying good-bye?

ERHART.

Yes, I thought that would be best; best for all of us. Our boxes were packed and everything settled. But of course when you sent for me, I—— [*Holding out his hands to her.*] Good-bye, mother.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a gesture of repulsion.*] Don't touch me!

ERHART.

[*Gently.*] Is t h a t your last word?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Sternly.*] Yes.

ERHART.

[*Turning.*] Good-bye to you, then, Aunt Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Pressing his hands.*] Good-bye, Erhart! And live your life—and be as happy—as happy as ever you can.

ERHART.

Thanks, Aunt. [*Bowing to* BORKMAN.] Good-bye, father. [*Whispers to* MRS. WILTON.] Let us get away, the sooner the better.

MRS. WILTON.

[*In a low voice.*] Yes, let us.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a malignant smile.*] Mrs. Wilton, do you think you are acting quite wisely in taking that girl with you?

MRS. WILTON.

[*Returning the smile, half ironically, half seriously.*] Men are so unstable, Mrs. Borkman. And women too.

When Erhart is done with me—and I with him—then it will be well for us both that he, poor fellow, should have some one to fall back upon.

MRS. BORKMAN.

But you yourself?

MRS. WILTON.

Oh, I shall know what to do, I assure you. Good-bye to you all!

[*She bows and goes out by the hall door.* ERHART *stands for a moment as though wavering; then he turns and follows her.*

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Dropping her folded hands.*] Childless

BORKMAN.

[*As though awakening to a resolution.*] Then out into the storm alone! My hat! My cloak!

[*He goes hastily towards the door.*

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*In terror, stopping him.*] John Gabriel, where are you going?

BORKMAN.

Out into the storm of life, I tell you. Let me go, Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Holding him back.*] No, no, I won't let you out! You are ill. I can see it in your face!

BORKMAN.

Let me go, I tell you!

[*He tears himself away from her, and goes out by the hall.*

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*In the doorway.*] Help me to hold him, Gunhild!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Coldly and sharply, standing in the middle of the room.*] I will not try to hold any one in all the world. Let them go away from me—both the one and the other! As far—as far as ever they please. [*Suddenly, with a piercing shriek.*] Erhart, don't leave me!

[*She rushes with outstretched arms towards the door.* ELLA RENTHEIM *stops her.*

ACT FOURTH

An open space outside the main building, which lies to the right. A projecting corner of it is visible, with a door approached by a flight of low stone steps. The background consists of steep fir-clad slopes, quite close at hand. On the left are small scattered trees, forming the margin of a wood. The snowstorm has ceased; but the newly fallen snow lies deep around. The fir-branches droop under heavy loads of snow. The night is dark, with drifting clouds. Now and then the moon gleams out faintly. Only a dim light is reflected from the snow.

BORKMAN, MRS. BORKMAN *and* ELLA RENTHEIM *are standing upon the steps,* BORKMAN *leaning wearily against the wall of the house. He has an old-fashioned cape thrown over his shoulders, holds a soft grey felt hat in one hand and a thick knotted stick in the other.* ELLA RENTHEIM *carries her cloak over her arm.* MRS. BORKMAN'S *great shawl has slipped down over her shoulders, so that her hair is uncovered.*

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Barring the way for* MRS. BORKMAN.] Don't go after him, Gunhild!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*In fear and agitation.*] Let me pass, I say! He m u s t not go away from me!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

It is utterly useless, I tell you! You will never overtake him.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Let me go, Ella! I will cry aloud after him all down the road. And he must hear his mother's cry!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

He c a n n o t hear you. You may be sure he is in the sledge already.

MRS. BORKMAN.

No, no; he can't be in the sledge yet!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

The doors are closed upon him long ago, believe me.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*In despair.*] If he is in the sledge, then he is there with her, with her—her!

BORKMAN.

[*Laughing gloomily.*] Then he probably won't hear his mother's cry.

MRS. BORKMAN.

No, he will not hear it. [*Listening.*] Hark! what is that?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Also listening.*] It sounds like sledge-bells.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a suppressed scream.*] It is h e r sledge!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Perhaps it's another.

MRS. BORKMAN.

No, no, it is Mrs. Wilton's covered sledge! I know the silver bells! Hark! Now they are driving right past here, at the foot of the hill!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Quickly.*] Gunhild, if you want to cry out to him, now is the time! Perhaps after all——! [*The tinkle of the bells sounds close at hand, in the wood.*] Make haste, Gunhild! Now they are right under us!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Stands for a moment undecided, then she stiffens and says sternly and coldly.*] No. I will not cry out to him. Let Erhart Borkman pass away from me—far, far away —to what he calls life and happiness.

[*The sound dies away in the distance.*

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*After a moment.*] Now the bells are out of hearing.

MRS. BORKMAN.

They sounded like funeral bells.

BORKMAN.

[*With a dry suppressed laugh.*] Oho—it is not for me they are ringing to-night!

MRS. BORKMAN.

No, but for me—and for him who has gone from me.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Nodding thoughtfully.*] Who knows if, after all, they may not be ringing in life and happiness for him, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With sudden animation, looking hard at her.*] Life and happiness, you say!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

For a little while at any rate.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Could you endure to let him know life and happiness, with h e r?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With warmth and feeling.*] Indeed I could, with all my heart and soul!

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Coldly.*] Then you must be richer than I am in the power of love.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking far away.*] Perhaps it is the l a c k of love that keeps that power alive.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Fixing her eyes on her.*] If that is so, then I shall soon be as rich as you, Ella.

[*She turns and goes into the house.*

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Stands for a time looking with a troubled expression at* BORKMAN; *then lays her hand cautiously upon his shoulder.*] Come, John—you must come in, too.

BORKMAN.

[*As if awakening.*] I?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, this winter air is too keen for you; I can see that, John. So come—come in with me—into the house, into the warmth.

BORKMAN.

[*Angrily.*] Up to the gallery again, I suppose.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

No, rather into the room below.

BORKMAN.

[*His anger flaming forth.*] Never will I set foot under that roof again!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Where will you go then? So late, and in the dark, John?

BORKMAN.

[*Putting on his hat.*] First of all, I will go out and see to all my buried treasures.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking anxiously at him.*] John—I don't understand you.

BORKMAN.

[*With laughter, interrupted by coughing.*] Oh, it is not hidden plunder I mean; don't be afraid of that, Ella. [*Stopping, and pointing outwards.*] Do you see that man there? Who is it?

[VILHELM FOLDAL, *in an old cape, covered with snow, with his hat-brim turned down, and a large umbrella in his hand, advances towards the corner of the house, laboriously stumbling through the snow. He is noticeably lame in his left foot.*

BORKMAN.

Vilhelm! What do you want with me again?

FOLDAL.

[*Looking up.*] Good heavens, are you out on the steps, John Gabriel? [*Bowing.*] And Mrs. Borkman, too, I see.

BORKMAN.

[*Shortly.*] This is not Mrs. Borkman.

FOLDAL.

Oh, I beg pardon. You see, I have lost my spectacles in the snow. But how is it that you, who never put your foot out of doors——?

BORKMAN.

[*Carelessly and gaily.*] It is high time I should come out into the open air again, don't you see? Nearly three years in detention—five years in prison—eight years in the gallery up there——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Distressed.*] Borkman, I beg you——

FOLDAL.

Ah yes, yes, yes!

BORKMAN.

But I want to know what has brought you here.

FOLDAL.

[*Still standing at the foot of the steps.*] I wanted to come up to you, John Gabriel. I felt I m u s t come to you, in the gallery. Ah me, that gallery——!

BORKMAN.

Did you want to come up to me after I had shown you the door?

FOLDAL.

Oh, I couldn't let t h a t stand in the way.

BORKMAN.

What have you done to your foot? I see you are limping?

FOLDAL.

Yes, what do you think—I have been run over.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Run over!

FOLDAL.

Yes, by a covered sledge.

BORKMAN.

Oho!

FOLDAL.

With two horses. They came down the hill at a tearing gallop. I couldn't get out of the way quick enough; and so——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

And so they ran over you?

FOLDAL.

They came right down upon me, madam—or miss. They came right upon me and sent me rolling over and over in the snow—so that I lost my spectacles and got my umbrella broken. [*Rubbing his leg.*] And my ankle a little hurt too.

BORKMAN.

[*Laughing inwardly.*] Do you know who were in that sledge, Vilhelm?

FOLDAL.

No, how could I see? It was a covered sledge, and the curtains were down. And the driver didn't stop a moment after he had sent me spinning. But it doesn't matter a bit, for—— [*With an outburst.*] Oh, I am so happy, so happy!

BORKMAN.

Happy?

FOLDAL.

Well, I don't exactly know what to call it. But I think happy is the nearest word. For something so wonderful has happened! And that is why I couldn't help—I had to come out and share my happiness with you, John Gabriel.

BORKMAN.

[*Harshly.*] Well, share away then!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh, but first take your friend indoors with you, Borkman.

BORKMAN.

[*Sternly.*] I have told you I will not go into the house.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

But don't you hear, he has been run over!

BORKMAN.

Oh, we are all of us run over, sometime or other in life. The thing is to jump up again, and let no one see you are hurt.

FOLDAL.

That is a profound saying, John Gabriel. But I can easily tell you my story out here, in a few words.

BORKMAN.

[*More mildly.*] Yes, please do, Vilhelm.

FOLDAL.

Well, now you shall hear! Only think, when I got home this evening after I had been with you, what did I find but a letter. Can you guess who it was from?

BORKMAN.

Possibly from your little Frida?

FOLDAL.

Precisely! Think of your hitting on it at once! Yes, it was a long—a pretty long letter from Frida. A footman had brought it. And can you imagine what was in it?

BORKMAN.

Perhaps it was to say good-bye to her mother and you?

FOLDAL.

Exactly! How good you are at guessing, John Gabriel! Yes, she tells me that Mrs. Wilton has taken such a fancy to her, and she is to go abroad with her and study music. And Mrs. Wilton has engaged a first-rate teacher who is to accompany them on the journey—and to read with Frida too. For unfortunately she has been a good deal neglected in some branches, you see.

BORKMAN.

[*Shaken with inward laughter.*] Of course, of course —I see it all quite clearly, Vilhelm.

FOLDAL.

[*Eagerly continuing.*] And only think, she knew nothing about the arrangement until this evening; at that party, you know, h'm! And yet she found time to write to me. And the letter is such a beautiful one—so warm and affectionate, I assure you. There is not a trace of contempt for her father in it. And then what a delicate thought it was to say good-bye to us by letter—before she started. [*Laughing.*] But of course I can't let her go like that.

BORKMAN.

[*Looks inquiringly at him.*] How so?

FOLDAL.

She tells me that they start early to-morrow morning; quite early.

BORKMAN.

Oh indeed—to-morrow? Does she tell you that?

FOLDAL.

[*Laughing and rubbing his hands.*] Yes; but I know a trick worth two of that, you see! I am going straight up to Mrs. Wilton's——

BORKMAN.

This evening?

FOLDAL.

Oh, it's not so very late yet. And even if the house is shut up, I shall ring; without hesitation. For I must and will see Frida before she starts. Good-night, good-night! [*Makes a movement to go.*

BORKMAN.

Stop a moment, my poor Vilhelm; you may spare yourself that heavy bit of road.

FOLDAL.

Oh, you are thinking of my ankle——

BORKMAN.

Yes; and in any case you won't get in at Mrs. Wilton's.

FOLDAL.

Yes, indeed I will. I'll go on ringing and knocking till some one comes and lets me in. For I must and will see Frida.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Your daughter has gone already, Mr. Foldal.

FOLDAL.

[*Stands as though thunderstruck.*] Has Frida gone already! Are you quite sure? Who told you?

BORKMAN.

We had it from her future teacher.

FOLDAL.

Indeed? And who is he?

BORKMAN.

A certain Mr. Erhart Borkman.

FOLDAL.

[*Beaming with joy.*] Your son, John Gabriel! Is he going with them?

BORKMAN.

Yes; it is he that is to help Mrs. Wilton with little Frida's education.

FOLDAL.

Oh, Heaven be praised! Then the child is in the best of hands. But is it quite certain that they have started with her already?

BORKMAN.

They took her away in that sledge which ran over you on the road.

FOLDAL.

[*Clasping his hands.*] To think that my little Frida was in that magnificent sledge!

BORKMAN.

[*Nodding.*] Yes, yes, Vilhelm, your daughter has come to drive in her carriage. And Master Erhart, too. Tell me, did you notice the silver bells?

FOLDAL.

Yes, indeed. Silver bells did you say? Were they silver? Real, genuine silver bells?

BORKMAN.

You may be quite sure of that. Everything was genuine—both outside and in.

FOLDAL.

[*In quiet emotion.*] Isn't it strange how fortune can sometimes befriend one? It is my—my little gift of song that has transmuted itself into music in Frida. So after all, it is not for nothing that I was born a poet. For now she is going forth into the great wide world, that I once yearned so passionately to see. Little Frida sets out in a splendid covered sledge with silver bells on the harness——

BORKMAN.

And runs over her father.

FOLDAL.

[*Happily.*] Oh, pooh! What does it matter about me, if only the child——! Well, so I am too late, then, after all. I must just go home again and comfort her mother. I left her crying in the kitchen.

BORKMAN.

Crying?

FOLDAL.

[*Smiling.*] Yes, would you believe it, she was crying her eyes out when I came away.

BORKMAN.

And you are laughing, Vilhelm?

FOLDAL.

Yes, *I* am, of course. But she, poor thing, she doesn't know any better, you see. Well, good-bye! It's a good thing I have the tramway so handy. Good-bye, good-bye, John Gabriel. Good-bye, Madam.

[*He bows and limps laboriously out by the way he came.*

BORKMAN.

[*Stands silent for a moment, gazing before him.*] Good-bye, Vilhelm! It is not the first time in your life that you've been run over, old friend.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Looking at him with suppressed anxiety.*] You are so pale, John, so very pale.

BORKMAN.

That is the effect of the prison air up yonder.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I have never seen you like this before.

BORKMAN.

No, for I suppose you have never seen an escaped convict before.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh, do come into the house with me, John!

BORKMAN.

It is no use trying to lure me in. I have told you——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

But when I beg and implore you——? For your own sake——

[THE MAID *opens the door, and stands in the doorway.*

THE MAID.

I beg pardon. Mrs. Borkman told me to lock the front door now.

BORKMAN.

[*In a low voice, to* ELLA.] You see, they want to lock me up again!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*To* THE MAID.] Mr. Borkman is not quite well. He wants to have a little fresh air before coming in.

THE MAID.

But Mrs. Borkman told me to——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I shall lock the door. Just leave the key in the lock.

THE MAID.

Oh, very well; I'll leave it.

[*She goes into the house again.*

BORKMAN.

[*Stands silent for a moment, and listens; then goes hastily down the steps and out into the open space.*] Now I am outside the walls, Ella! Now they will never get hold of me again!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Who has gone down to him.*] But you are a free man in there, too, John. You can come and go just as you please.

BORKMAN.

[*Softly, as though in terror.*] Never under a roof again! It is so good to be out here in the night. If I went up into the gallery now, ceiling and walls would shrink together and crush me—crush me flat as a fly.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

But where will you go, then?

BORKMAN.

I will simply go on, and on, and on. I will try if I cannot make my way to freedom, and life, and human beings again. Will you go with me, Ella?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

I? Now?

BORKMAN.

Yes, at once!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

But how far?

BORKMAN.

As far as ever I can.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh, but think what you are doing! Out in this raw, cold winter night——

BORKMAN.

[*Speaking very hoarsely.*] Oho—my lady is concerned about her health? Yes, yes—I know it is delicate.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

It is your health I am concerned about.

BORKMAN.

Hohoho! A dead man's health! I can't help laughing at you, Ella! [*He moves onwards.*

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Following him: holding him back.*] What did you call yourself?

BORKMAN.

A dead man, I said. Don't you remember, Gunhild told me to lie quiet where I was?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With resolution, throwing her cloak around her.*] I will go with you, John.

BORKMAN.

Yes, we two belong to each other, Ella. [*Advancing.*] So come!

[*They have gradually passed into the low wood on the left. It conceals them little by little, until they are quite lost to sight. The house and the open space disappear. The landscape, consisting of wooded slopes and ridges, slowly changes and grows wilder and wilder.*

ELLA RENTHEIM'S VOICE.

[*Is heard in the wood to the right.*] Where are we going, John? I don't recognise this place.

BORKMAN'S VOICE.

[*Higher up.*] Just follow my footprints in the snow!

ELLA RENTHEIM'S VOICE.

But why need we climb so high?

BORKMAN'S VOICE.

[*Nearer at hand.*] We must go up the winding path.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Still hidden.*] Oh, but I can't go much further.

BORKMAN.

[*On the verge of the wood to the right.*] Come, come! We are not far from the view now. There used to be a seat there.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Appearing among the trees.*] Do you remember it?

BORKMAN.

You can rest there.

[*They have emerged upon a small high-lying, open plateau in the wood. The mountain rises abruptly behind them. To the left, far below, an extensive fiord landscape, with high ranges in the distance, towering one above the other. On the plateau, to the left, a dead fir-tree with a bench under it. The snow lies deep upon the plateau.*

[BORKMAN *and, after him,* ELLA RENTHEIM *enter from the right and wade with difficulty through the snow.*

BORKMAN.

[*Stopping at the verge of the steep declivity on the left.*] Come here, Ella, and you shall see.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Coming up to him.*] What do you want to show me, John?

BORKMAN.

[*Pointing outwards.*] Do you see how free and open the country lies before us—away to the far horizon?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

We have often sat on this bench before, and looked out into a much, much further distance.

BORKMAN.

It was a dreamland we then looked out over.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Nodding sadly.*] It was the dreamland of our life, yes. And now that land is buried in snow. And the old tree is dead.

BORKMAN.

[*Not listening to her.*] Can you see the smoke of the great steamships out on the fiord?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

No.

BORKMAN.

I can. They come and they go. They weave a network of fellowship all round the world. They shed light and warmth over the souls of men in many thousands of homes. That was what I dreamed of doing.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Softly.*] And it remained a dream.

BORKMAN.

It remained a dream, yes. [*Listening.*] And hark, down by the river, dear! The factories are working! My factories! All those that I would have created! Listen! Do you hear them humming? The night shift is on—so they are working night and day. Hark! hark! the wheels are whirling and the bands are flashing—round and round and round. Can't you hear, Ella?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

No.

BORKMAN.

I can hear it.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Anxiously.*] I think you are mistaken, John.

BORKMAN.

[*More and more fired.*] Oh, but all these—they are only like the outworks around the kingdom, I tell you!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

The kingdom, you say? What kingdom?

BORKMAN.

My kingdom, of course! The kingdom I was on the point of conquering when I—when I died.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Shaken, in a low voice.*] Oh, John, John!

BORKMAN.

And now there it lies—defenceless, masterless—exposed to all the robbers and plunderers. Ella, do you see the mountain chains there—far away? They soar, they tower aloft, one behind the other! That is my vast, my infinite, inexhaustible kingdom!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Oh, but there comes an icy blast from that kingdom, John!

BORKMAN.

That blast is the breath of life to me. That blast comes to me like a greeting from subject spirits. I seem to touch them, the prisoned millions; I can see the veins of metal stretch out their winding, branching, luring arms to me. I saw them before my eyes like living shapes, that night when I stood in the strong-room with the candle in my hand. You begged to be liberated, and I tried to free you. But my strength failed me; and the treasure sank back into the deep again. [*With outstretched hands.*] But I will whisper it to you here in the stillness of the night: I love you, as you lie there spell-bound in the deeps and the darkness! I love you, unborn treasures, yearning for the light! I love you, with all your shining train of power and glory! I love you, love you, love you!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*In suppressed but rising agitation.*] Yes, your love is still down there, John. It has always been rooted there. But here, in the light of day, here there was a living, warm, human heart that throbbed and glowed for you. And this heart you crushed. Oh worse than that! Ten times worse! You sold it for—for——

BORKMAN.

[*Trembles; a cold shudder seems to go through him.*] For the kingdom—and the power—and the glory—you mean?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

Yes, that is what I mean. I have said it once before to-night: you have murdered the love-life in the woman

who loved you. And whom you loved in return, so far as you could love any one. [*With uplifted arm.*] And therefore I prophesy to you, John Gabriel Borkman —you will never touch the price you demanded for the murder. You will never enter in triumph into your cold, dark kingdom!

BORKMAN.

[*Staggers to the bench and seats himself heavily.*] I almost fear your prophecy will come true, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Going up to him.*] You must not fear it, John. That is the best thing that can happen to you.

BORKMAN.

[*With a shriek; clutching at his breast.*] Ah——! [*Feebly.*] Now it let me go again.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Shaking him.*] What was it, John?

BORKMAN.

[*Sinking down against the back of the seat.*] It was a hand of ice that clutched at my heart.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

John! Did you feel the ice-hand again!

BORKMAN.

[*Murmurs.*] No. No ice-hand. It was a metal hand.
[*He sinks right down upon the bench.*

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Tears off her cloak and throws it over him.*] Lie still where you are! I will go and bring help for you.

[*She goes a step or two towards the right; then she stops, returns, and carefully feels his pulse and touches his face.*

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Softly and firmly.*] No. It is best so, John Borkman. Best só for you.

[*She spreads the cloak closer around him, and sinks down in the snow in front of the bench. A short silence.*

[MRS. BORKMAN, *wrapped in a mantle, comes through the wood on the right.* THE MAID *goes before her carrying a lantern.*

THE MAID.

[*Throwing the light upon the snow.*] Yes, yes, ma'am, here are their tracks.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Peering around.*] Yes, here they are! They are sitting there on the bench. [*Calls.*] Ella!

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Rising.*] Are you looking for us?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Sternly.*] Yes, you see I have to.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Pointing.*] Look, there he lies, Gunhild.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Sleeping?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

A long, deep sleep, I think.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With an outburst.*] Ella! [*Controls herself and asks in a low voice.*] Did he do it—of his own accord?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

No.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Relieved.*] Not by his own hand then?

ELLA RENTHEIM.

No. It was an ice-cold metal hand that gripped him by the heart.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*To* THE MAID.] Go for help. Get the men to come up from the farm.

THE MAID.

Yes, I will, ma'am. [*To herself.*] Lord save us!
[*She goes out through the wood to the right.*

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Standing behind the bench.*] So the night air has killed him——

ELLA RENTHEIM.

So it appears.

MRS. BORKMAN.

——strong man that he was.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Coming in front of the bench.*] Will you not look at him, Gunhild?

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*With a gesture of repulsion.*] No, no, no. [*Lowering her voice.*] He was a miner's son, John Gabriel Borkman. He could not live in the fresh air.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

It was rather the cold that killed him.

MRS. BORKMAN.

[*Shakes her head.*] The cold, you say? The cold—that had killed him long ago.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*Nodding to her.*] Yes—and changed us two into shadows.

MRS. BORKMAN.

You are right there.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

[*With a painful smile.*] A dead man and two shadows—t h a t is what the cold has made of us.

MRS. BORKMAN.

Yes, the coldness of heart.—And now I think we two may hold out our hands to each other, Ella.

ELLA RENTHEIM

I think we may, now.

MRS. BORKMAN.

We twin sisters—over him we have both loved.

ELLA RENTHEIM.

We two shadows—over the dead man.

[MRS. BORKMAN *behind the bench, and* ELLA RENTHEIM *in front of it, take each other's hand.*

WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN

WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN

INTRODUCTION *

FROM *Pillars of Society* to *John Gabriel Borkman*, Ibsen's plays had followed each other at regular intervals of two years, save when his indignation over the abuse heaped upon *Ghosts* reduced to a single year the interval between that play and *An Enemy of the People*. *John Gabriel Borkman* having appeared in 1896, its successor was expected in 1898; but Christmas came and brought no rumour of a new play. In a man now over seventy, this breach of a long-established habit seemed ominous. The new National Theatre in Christiania was opened in September of the following year; and when I then met Ibsen (for the last time) he told me that he was actually at work on a new play, which he thought of calling a "Dramatic Epilogue." "He wrote *When We Dead Awaken*," says Dr. Elias, "with such labour and such passionate agitation, so spasmodically and so feverishly, that those around him were almost alarmed. He must get on with it, he must get on! He seemed to hear the beating of dark pinions over his head. He seemed to feel the grim Visitant, who had accompanied Alfred Allmers on the mountain paths, already standing behind him with uplifted hand. His relatives are firmly convinced that he knew

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quite clearly that this would be his last play, that he was to write no more. And soon the blow fell."

The *Literary Remains* contain some preliminary jottings for *When We Dead Awaken*, and a rejected draft of the final scene. From the jottings it appears that the play was to have been called *The Resurrection Day*, and that Ibsen originally thought of introducing at least two characters whom he ultimately suppressed—the Physician at the Baths, "a youngish, intelligent man," and "the Tattling Lady from the capital" who "is considered immensely amusing by the patients," and is "malicious out of thoughtlessness." At the end of a rough scenario of the first act there occurs the following curious reflection: "In this country it is only the mountains which have any resonance [literally "give an echo"] not the people." In the draft of the last scene, Rubek, Irene, Ulfheim and Maia are all assembled outside Ulfheim's hut. The fragment begins thus:

MAIA (*interrupting*). Is it not strange that we four should meet here in the middle of the wild mountains?

RUBEK. You with an eagle-shooter, and I with—(*to Irene*)—with what shall I say?

IRENE. With a shot eagle.

MAIA. Shot?

IRENE. Winged, madam.

Ulfheim unlocks the hut, and produces from it champagne and glasses, which he fills.

ULFHEIM (*to Maia*). What shall we drink to, honoured lady?

MAIA. Let us drink to freedom!

(*She empties her glass at one draught.*)

RUBEK. Yes, let us drink to freedom. (*He drinks.*)

IRENE. And to the courage which dares to use it.

(*She takes a sip from her glass and pours the rest on the ground.*)

After Ulfheim and Maia have departed, Rubek and Irene have a last conversation which ends thus:—

IRENE. The craving for life is dead in me. Now I have arisen, and I see that life lies a corpse. The whole of life lies on its bier—(*The clouds droop slowly down in the form of a clammy mist*). See how the shroud is drooping over us, too! But I will not die over again, Arnold!—Save me! Save me, if you can and if you will!

RUBEK. Above the mists I see the mountain peak. It stands there glittering in the sunrise. We must climb to it—through the night mists, up into the light of morning.

(*The mists droop closer and closer over the scene.* RUBEK *and* IRENE *descend into the mist-veil and are gradually lost to sight.*)

(*The* SISTER OF MERCY'S *head, spying, comes in sight in a rift in the mist.*)

(*High up above the sea of the mist, the peak shines in the morning sun.*)

And that is the end.

When We Dead Awaken was published very shortly before Christmas 1899. Ibsen had still a year of comparative health before him. We find him, in March 1900, writing to Count Prozor: "I cannot say yet whether or

not I shall write another drama; but if I continue to retain the vigour of body and mind which I at present enjoy, I do not imagine that I shall be able to keep permanently away from the old battlefields. However, if I were to make my appearance again, it would be with new weapons and in new armour." Was he hinting at the desire, which he had long ago confessed to Professor Herford, that his last work should be a drama in verse? Whatever his dream, it was not to be realised. His last letter (defending his attitude of philosophic impartiality with regard to the South African war) is dated December 9, 1900. With the dawn of the new century, the curtain descended upon the mind of the great dramatic poet of the age which had passed away.

When We Dead Awaken was acted during 1900 at most of the leading theatres in Scandinavia and Germany. In some German cities (notably in Frankfort on Main) it even attained a considerable number of representations. I cannot learn, however, that it has anywhere held the stage. It was produced in London, by the Stage Society, at the Imperial Theatre, on January 25 and 26, 1903. Mr. G. S. Titheradge played Rubek, Miss Henrietta Watson Irene, Miss Mabel Hackney Maia, and Mr. Laurence Irving Ulfheim. In New York it was acted at the Knickerbocker Theatre, the part of Irene being taken by Miss Florence Kahn, and that of Rubek by Mr. Frederick Lewis.

In the above-mentioned letter to Count Prozor, Ibsen confirmed that critic's conjecture that "the series which ends with the Epilogue really began with *The Master Builder*." As the last confession, so to speak, of a great

artist, the Epilogue will always be read with interest. It contains, moreover, many flashes of the old genius, many strokes of the old incommunicable magic. One may say with perfect sincerity that there is more fascination in the dregs of Ibsen's mind than in the "first sprightly running" of more commonplace talents. But to his sane admirers the interest of the play must always be melancholy, because it is purely pathological. To deny this is, in my opinion, to cast a slur over all the poet's previous work, and in great measure to justify the criticisms of his most violent detractors. For *When We Dead Awaken* is very like the sort of play that haunted the "anti-Ibsenite" imagination in the year 1893 or thereabouts. It is a piece of self-caricature, a series of echoes from all the earlier plays, an exaggeration of manner to the pitch of mannerism. Moreover, in his treatment of his symbolic motives, Ibsen did exactly what he had hitherto, with perfect justice, plumed himself upon never doing: he sacrificed the surface reality to the underlying meaning. Take, for instance, the history of Rubek's statue and its development into a group. In actual sculpture this development is a grotesque impossibility. In conceiving it we are deserting the domain of reality, and plunging into some fourth dimension where the properties of matter are other than those we know. This is an abandonment of the fundamental principle which Ibsen over and over again emphatically expressed—namely, that any symbolism his work might be found to contain was entirely incidental, and subordinate to the truth and consistency of his picture of life. Even when he dallied with the supernatural, as in *The Master Builder* and *Little Eyolf*,

he was always careful, as I have tried to show, not to overstep decisively the boundaries of the natural. Here, on the other hand, without any suggestion of the supernatural, we are confronted with the wholly impossible, the inconceivable. How remote is this alike from his principles of art and from the consistent, unvarying practice of his better years! So great is the chasm between *John Gabriel Borkman* and *When We Dead Awaken* that one could almost suppose his mental breakdown to have preceded instead of followed the writing of the latter play. Certainly it is one of the premonitions of the coming end. It is Ibsen's *Count Robert of Paris*. To pretend to rank it with his masterpieces is to show a very imperfect sense of the nature of their mastery.

WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN

(1899)

CHARACTERS

PROFESSOR ARNOLD RUBEK, *a sculptor.*
MRS. MAIA RUBEK, *his wife.*
The INSPECTOR at the Baths.
ULFHEIM, *a landed proprietor.*
A STRANGER LADY.
A SISTER OF MERCY.

Servants, Visitors to the Baths, and Children.

The First Act passes at a bathing establishment on the coast; the Second and Third Acts in the neighbourhood of a health resort, high in the mountains.

WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN

A DRAMATIC EPILOGUE

ACT FIRST

Outside the Bath Hotel. A portion of the main building can be seen to the right. An open, park-like place with a fountain, groups of fine old trees, and shrubbery. To the left, a little pavilion almost covered with ivy and Virginia creeper. A table and chair outside it. At the back a view over the fiord, right out to sea, with headlands and small islands in the distance. It is a calm, warm and sunny summer morning.

PROFESSOR RUBEK *and* MRS. MAIA RUBEK *are sitting in basket chairs beside a covered table on the lawn outside the hotel, having just breakfasted. They have champagne and seltzer-water on the table, and each has a newspaper.* PROFESSOR RUBEK *is an elderly man of distinguished appearance, wearing a black velvet jacket, and otherwise in light summer attire.* MAIA *is quite young, with a vivacious expression and lively, mocking eyes, yet with a suggestion of fatigue. She wears an elegant travelling dress.*

MAIA.

[*Sits for some time as though waiting for the* PROFESSOR *to say something, then lets her paper drop with a deep sigh.*] Oh dear, dear, dear——!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looks up from his paper.*] Well, Maia? What is the matter with you?

MAIA.

Just listen how silent it is here.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Smiles indulgently.*] And you can hear that?

MAIA.

What?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

The silence?

MAIA.

Yes, indeed I can.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Well, perhaps you are right, *mein Kind.* One can really hear the silence.

MAIA.

Heaven knows you can—when it's so absolutely overpowering as it is here——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Here at the Baths, you mean?

MAIA.

Wherever you go at home here, it seems to me. Of course there was noise and bustle enough in the town.

But I don't know how it is—even the noise and bustle seemed to have something dead about it.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With a searching glance.*] You don't seem particularly glad to be at home again, Maia?

MAIA.

[*Looks at him.*] Are y o u glad?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Evasively.*] I——?

MAIA.

Yes, you, who have been so much, much further away than I. Are y o u entirely happy, now that you are at home again?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

No—to be quite candid—perhaps not entirely happy——

MAIA.

[*With animation.*] There, you see! Didn't I know it!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I have perhaps been too long abroad. I have drifted quite away from all this—this home life.

MAIA.

[*Eagerly, drawing her chair nearer him.*] There, you see, Rubek! We had much better get away again! As quickly as ever we can.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Somewhat impatiently.*] Well, well, that is what we intend to do, my dear Maia. You know that.

MAIA.

But why not now—at once? Only think how cosy and comfortable we could be down there, in our lovely new house——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Smiles indulgently.*] We ought by rights to say: our lovely new h o m e.

MAIA.

[*Shortly.*] I prefer to say h o u s e—let us keep to that.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*His eyes dwelling on her.*] You are really a strange little person.

MAIA.

Am I so strange?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Yes, I think so.

MAIA.

But why, pray? Perhaps because I'm not desperately in love with mooning about up here——?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Which of us was it that was absolutely bent on our coming north this summer?

MAIA.

I admit, it was I.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

It was certainly not I, at any rate.

MAIA.

But good heavens, who could have dreamt that everything would have altered so terribly at home here? And in so short a time, too! Why, it is only just four years since I went away——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Since you were married, yes.

MAIA.

Married? What has t h a t to do with the matter?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Continuing*]—since you became the Frau Professor, and found yourself mistress of a charming home—I beg your pardon—a very handsome house, I ought to say. And a villa on the Lake of Taunitz, just at the point that has become most fashionable, too— In fact it is all very handsome and distinguished, Maia, there's no denying that. And spacious too. We need not always be getting in each other's way——

MAIA.

[*Lightly.*] No, no, no—there's certainly no lack of house-room, and that sort of thing——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Remember, too, that you have been living in altogether more spacious and distinguished surroundings—in more polished society than you were accustomed to at home.

MAIA.

[*Looking at him.*] Ah, so you think it is *I* that have changed?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Indeed I do, Maia.

MAIA.

I alone? Not the people here?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Oh yes, they too—a little, perhaps. And not at all in the direction of amiability. That I readily admit.

MAIA.

I should think you must admit it, indeed.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Changing the subject.*] Do you know how it affects me when I look at the life of the people around us here?

MAIA.

No. Tell me.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

It makes me think of that night we spent in the train, when we were coming up here——

MAIA.

Why, you were sound asleep all the time.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Not quite. I noticed how silent it became at all the little roadside stations. I h e a r d the silence—like you, Maia——

MAIA.

H'm,—like me, yes.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

—and that assured me that we had crossed the frontier—that we were really at home. For the train stopped at all the little stations—although there was nothing doing at all.

MAIA.

Then why did it stop—though there was nothing to be done?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Can't say. No one got out or in; but all the same the train stopped a long, endless time. And at every station I could make out that there were two railway men walking up and down the platform—one with a lantern in his hand—and they said things to each other in the night, low, and toneless, and meaningless.

MAIA.

Yes, that is quite true. There are always two men walking up and down, and talking——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

—of nothing. [*Changing to a livelier tone.*] But just wait till to-morrow. Then we shall have the great luxurious steamer lying in the harbour. We'll go on board her, and sail all round the coast—northward ho!—right to the polar sea.

MAIA.

Yes, but then you will see nothing of the country—and of the people. And that was what you particularly wanted.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Short and snappishly.*] I have seen more than enough.

MAIA.

Do you think a sea voyage will be better for you?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

It is always a change.

MAIA.

Well well, if only it is the right thing for y o u——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

For me? The right thing? There is nothing in the world the matter with me.

MAIA.

[*Rises and goes up to him.*] Yes, there is, Rubek. I am sure you must feel it yourself.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Why, my dearest Maia—what should be amiss with me?

MAIA.

[*Behind him, bending over the back of his chair.*] That y o u must tell m e. You have begun to wander about without a moment's peace. You cannot rest anywhere —neither at home nor abroad. You have become quite misanthropic of late.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With a touch of sarcasm.*] Dear me—have y o u noticed t h a t?

MAIA.

No one that knows you can help noticing it. And then it seems to me so sad that you have lost all pleasure in your work.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

That too, eh?

MAIA.

You that used to be so indefatigable—working from morning to night!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Gloomily.*] U s e d to be, yes——

MAIA.

But ever since you got your great masterpiece out of hand——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Nods thoughtfully.*] "The Resurrection Day"——

MAIA.

—the masterpiece that has gone round the whole world, and made you so famous——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Perhaps that is just the misfortune, Maia.

MAIA.

How so?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

When I had finished this masterpiece of mine—[*Makes a passionate movement with his hand*]—for "The Resurrection Day" i s a masterpiece! Or w a s one in the beginning. No, it is one still. It m u s t, m u s t, m u s t be a masterpiece!

MAIA.

[*Looks at him in astonishment.*] Why, Rubek—all the world knows t h a t.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Short, repellently.*] All the world knows nothing! Understands nothing!

MAIA.

Well. at any rate it can divine something——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Something that isn't there at all, yes. Something that never was in my mind. Ah yes, t h a t they can all go into ecstasies over! [*Growling to himself.*] What is the good of working oneself to death for the mob and the masses—for "all the world"!

MAIA.

Do you think it is better, then—do you think it is worthy of y o u, to do nothing at all but a portrait-bust now and then?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With a sly smile.*] They are not exactly portrait-busts that I turn out, Maia.

MAIA.

Yes, indeed they are—for the last two or three years—ever since you finished your great group and got it out of the house——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

All the same, they are no mere portrait-busts, I assure you.

MAIA.

What are they, then?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

There is something equivocal, something cryptic, lurking in and behind these busts—a secret something, that the people themselves cannot see——

MAIA.

Indeed?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Decisively.*] I alone can see it. And it amuses me unspeakably.—On the surface I give them the "striking likeness," as they call it, that they all stand and gape at in astonishment—[*Lowers his voice.*] —but at bottom they are all respectable, pompous horse-faces, and self-opinionated donkey-muzzles, and lop-eared, low-browed dog-skulls, and fatted swine-snouts—and sometimes dull, brutal bull-fronts as well——

MAIA.

[*Indifferently.*] All the dear domestic animals, in fact.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Simply the dear domestic animals, Maia. All the animals which men have bedevilled in their own image—and which have bedevilled men in return. [*Empties his champagne-glass and laughs.*] And it is these double-faced works of art that our excellent plutocrats come and order of me. And pay for in all good faith—and in good round figures too—almost their weight in gold, as the saying goes.

MAIA.

[*Fills his glass.*] Come, Rubek! Drink and be happy.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Passes his hand several times across his forehead and leans back in his chair.*] I a m happy, Maia. Really happy—in a way. [*Short silence.*] For after all there is

a certain happiness in feeling oneself free and independent on every hand—in having at one's command everything one can possibly wish for—all outward things, that is to say. Do you not agree with me, Maia?

MAIA.

Oh yes, I agree. All that is well enough in its way. [*Looking at him.*] But do you remember what you promised me the day we came to an understanding on—on that troublesome point——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Nods.*] —On the subject of our marriage, yes. It was no easy matter for you, Maia.

MAIA.

[*Continuing unruffled.*] —and agreed that I was to go abroad with you, and live there for good and all—and enjoy myself.—Do you remember what you promised me that day?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Shaking his head.*] No, I can't say that I do. Well, what did I promise?

MAIA.

You said you would take me up to a high mountain and show me all the glory of the world.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With a slight start.*] Did I promise y o u that, too?

MAIA.

Me too? Who else, pray?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Indifferently.*] No, no, I only meant did I promise to show you——?

MAIA.

—all the glory of the world? Yes, you did. And all that glory should be mine, you said.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

That is a sort of figure of speech that I was in the habit of using once upon a time.

MAIA.

Only a figure of speech?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Yes, a schoolboy phrase—the sort of thing I used to say when I wanted to lure the neighbours' children out to play with me, in the woods and on the mountains.

MAIA.

[*Looking hard at him.*] Perhaps you only wanted to lure me out to play, as well?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Passing it off as a jest.*] Well, has it not been a tolerably amusing game, Maia?

MAIA.

[*Coldly.*] I did not go with you only to play.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

No, no, I daresay not.

MAIA.

And you never took me up with you to any high mountain, or showed me——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With irritation.*] —all the glory of the world? No, I did not. For, let me tell you something: you are not really born to be a mountain-climber, little Maia.

MAIA.

[*Trying to control herself.*] Yet at one time you seemed to think I was.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Four or five years ago, yes. [*Stretching himself in his chair.*] Four or five years—it's a long, long time, Maia.

MAIA.

[*Looking at him with a bitter expression.*] Has the time seemed so very long to you, Rubek?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I am beginning now to find it a trifle long. [*Yawning.*] Now and then, you know.

MAIA.

[*Returning to her place.*] I shall not bore you any longer.

[*She resumes her seat, takes up the newspaper, and begins turning over the leaves. Silence on both sides.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Leaning on his elbows across the table, and looking at her teasingly.*] Is the Frau Professor offended?

MAIA.

[*Coldly, without looking up.*] No, not at all.

[*Visitors to the baths, most of them ladies, begin to pass, singly and in groups, through the park from the right, and out to the left.*

[WAITERS *bring refreshments from the hotel, and go off behind the pavilion.*

[*The* INSPECTOR, *wearing gloves and carrying a stick, comes from his rounds in the park, meets visitors, bows politely, and exchanges a few words with some of them.*

THE INSPECTOR.

[*Advancing to* PROFESSOR RUBEK'S *table and politely taking off his hat.*] I have the honour to wish you good morning, Mrs. Rubek. Good morning, Professor Rubek.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Good morning, good morning, Inspector.

THE INSPECTOR.

[*Addressing himself to* MRS. RUBEK.] May I venture to ask if you have slept well?

MAIA.

Yes, thank you; excellently—for m y part. I always sleep like a stone.

THE INSPECTOR.

I am delighted to hear it. The first night in a strange place is often rather trying. And the Professor——?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Oh, m y night's rest is never much to boast of—especially of late.

THE INSPECTOR.

[*With a show of sympathy.*] Oh—that is a pity. But after a few weeks' stay at the Baths—you will quite get over t h a t.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looking up at him.*] Tell me, Inspector—are any of your patients in the habit of taking baths during the night?

THE INSPECTOR.

[*Astonished.*] During the night? No, I have never heard of such a thing.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Have you not?

THE INSPECTOR.

No, I don't know of any one so ill as to require such treatment.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Well, at any rate there is some one who is in the habit of walking about the park by night?

THE INSPECTOR.

[*Smiling and shaking his head.*] No, Professor—that would be against the rules.

MAIA.

[*Impatiently.*] Good Heavens, Rubek, I told you so this morning—you must have dreamt it.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Drily.*] Indeed? Must I? Thank you! [*Turning to the* INSPECTOR.] The fact is, I got up last night—I couldn't sleep—and I wanted to see what sort of night it was——

THE INSPECTOR.

[*Attentively.*] To be sure—and then——?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I looked out at the window—and caught sight of a white figure in there among the trees.

MAIA.

[*Smiling to the* INSPECTOR.] And the Professor declares that the figure was dressed in a bathing costume.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

—Or something like it, I said. Couldn't distinguish very clearly. But I am sure it was something white.

THE INSPECTOR.

Most remarkable. Was it a gentleman or a lady?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I could almost have sworn it was a lady. But then after it came another figure. And that one was quite dark—like a shadow——

THE INSPECTOR.

[*Starting.*] A dark one? Quite black, perhaps?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Yes, I should almost have said so.

THE INSPECTOR.

[*A light breaking in upon him.*] And behind the white figure? Following close upon her——?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Yes—at a little distance——

THE INSPECTOR.

Aha! Then I think I can explain the mystery, Professor.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Well, what was it then?

MAIA.

[*Simultaneously.*] Was the Professor really not dreaming?

THE INSPECTOR.

[*Suddenly whispering, as he directs their attention toward the background on the right.*] Hush, if you please! Look there— Don't speak loud for a moment.

[*A slender lady, dressed in fine, cream-white cashmere, and followed by a* SISTER OF MERCY *in black, with a silver cross hanging by a chain on her breast, comes forward from behind the hotel and crosses the park toward the pavilion in front on the left. Her face is pale, and its lines seem to have stiffened; the eyelids are drooped and the eyes appear as though they saw nothing. Her dress comes down to her feet and clings to the body in perpendicular folds. Over her head, neck, breast, shoulders and arms she wears a large shawl of white crape. She keeps her arms crossed upon her breast. She carries her body immovably, and her steps are stiff and measured. The* SISTER'S *bearing is also measured, and she has the air of a servant. She keeps her brown piercing eyes incessantly fixed upon the lady.* WAITERS, *with napkins on their arms, come forward in the hotel doorway, and cast curious glances at the strangers, who take no notice of anything, and, without looking round, enter the pavilion.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Has risen slowly and involuntarily, and stands staring at the closed door of the pavilion.*] Who was that lady?

THE INSPECTOR.

She is a stranger who has rented the little pavilion there.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

A foreigner?

THE INSPECTOR.

Presumably. At any rate they both came from abroad —about a week ago. They have never been here before.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Decidedly; looking at him.*] It was she I saw in the park last night.

THE INSPECTOR.

No doubt it must have been. I thought so from the first.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

What is this lady's name, Inspector?

THE INSPECTOR.

She has registered herself as "Madame de Satow, with companion." We know nothing more.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Reflecting.*] Satow? Satow——?

MAIA.

[*Laughing mockingly.*] Do you know any one of that name, Rubek? Eh?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Shaking his head.*] No, no one. Satow? It sounds Russian—or at all events Slavonic. [*To the* INSPECTOR.] What language does she speak?

THE INSPECTOR.

When the two ladies talk to each other, it is in a language I cannot make out at all. But at other times she speaks Norwegian like a native.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Exclaims with a start.*] Norwegian? You are sure you are not mistaken?

THE INSPECTOR.

No, how could I be mistaken in that?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looks at him with eager interest.*] You have heard her yourself?

THE INSPECTOR.

Yes. I myself have spoken to her—several times.—Only a few words, however; she is far from communicative. But——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

But Norwegian it was?

THE INSPECTOR.

Thoroughly good Norwegian—perhaps with a little north-country accent.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Gazing straight before him in amazement, whispers.*] That too!

MAIA.

[*A little hurt and jarred.*] Perhaps this lady has been one of your models, Rubek? Search your memory.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looks cuttingly at her.*] My models!

MAIA.

[*With a provoking smile.*] In your younger days, I mean. You are said to have had such innumerable models—long ago, of course.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*In the same tone.*] Oh no, little Frau Maia. I have in reality had only one single model. One and one only —for everything I have done.

THE INSPECTOR.

[*Who has turned away and stands looking out to the left.*] If you'll excuse me, I think I will take my leave. I see some one coming whom it is not particularly agreeable to meet. Especially in the presence of ladies.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looking in the same direction.*] That sportsman there? Who is it?

THE INSPECTOR.

It is a certain Mr. Ulfheim, from——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Oh, Mr. Ulfheim——

THE INSPECTOR.

—The bear-killer, as they call him——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I know him.

THE INSPECTOR.

Who does n o t know him?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Very slightly, however. Is he on your list of patients —at last?

THE INSPECTOR.

No, strangely enough—not as yet. He comes here only once a year—on his way up to his hunting-grounds.—Excuse me for the moment——

[*Makes a movement to go into the hotel.*

ULFHEIM'S VOICE.

[*Heard outside.*] Stop a moment, man! Devil take it all, can't you stop? Why do you always scuttle away from me?

THE INSPECTOR.

[*Stops.*] I am not scuttling at all, Mr. Ulfheim.

[ULFHEIM *enters from the left followed by a servant with a couple of sporting dogs in leash.* ULFHEIM *is in shooting costume, with high boots and a felt hat with a feather in it. He is a long, lank, sinewy personage, with matted hair and beard, and a loud voice. His appearance gives no precise clue to his age, but he is no longer young.*]

ULFHEIM.

[*Pounces upon the* INSPECTOR.] Is t h i s a way to receive strangers, hey? You scamper away with your tail between your legs—as if you had the devil at your heels.

THE INSPECTOR.

[*Calmly, without answering him.*] Has Mr. Ulfheim arrived by the steamer?

ULFHEIM.

[*Growls.*] Haven't had the honour of seeing any steamer. [*With his arms akimbo.*] Don't you know that *I* sail my own cutter? [*To the* SERVANT.] Look well after your fellow-creatures, Lars. But take care you keep them ravenous, all the same. Fresh meat-bones—but not too much meat on them, do you hear? And be sure it's reeking raw, and bloody. And get something in your own belly while you're about it. [*Aiming a kick at him.*] Now then, go to hell with you!

[*The* SERVANT *goes out with the dogs, behind the corner of the hotel.*

THE INSPECTOR.

Would not Mr. Ulfheim like to go into the dining-room in the meantime?

ULFHEIM.

In among all the half-dead flies and people? No thank you a thousand times, Mr. Inspector.

THE INSPECTOR.

Well, well, as you please.

ULFHEIM.

But get the housekeeper to prepare a hamper for me as usual. There must be plenty of provender in it—and lots of brandy—! You can tell her that I or Lars will come and play Old Harry with her if she doesn't——

THE INSPECTOR.

[*Interrupting.*] We know your ways of old. [*Turning.*] Can I give the waiter any orders, Professor? Can I send Mrs. Rubek anything?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

No thank you; nothing for me.

MAIA.

Nor for me. [*The* INSPECTOR *goes into the hotel.*

ULFHEIM.

[*Stares at them a moment; then lifts his hat.*] Why, blast me if here isn't a country tyke that has strayed into regular tip-top society.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looking up.*] What do you mean by that, Mr. Ulfheim?

ULFHEIM.

[*More quietly and politely.*] I believe I have the honour of addressing no less a person than the great Sculptor Rubek.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Nods.*] I remember meeting you once or twice—the autumn when I was last at home.

ULFHEIM.

That's many years ago now, though. And then you weren't so illustrious as I hear you've since become. At that time even a dirty bear-hunter might venture to come near you.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Smiling.*] I don't bite even now.

MAIA.

[*Looks with interest at* ULFHEIM.] Are y o u really and truly a bear-hunter?

ULFHEIM.

[*Seating himself at the next table, nearer the hotel.*] A bear-hunter when I have the chance, madam. But I make the best of any sort of game that comes in my way —eagles, and wolves, and women, and elks, and reindeer —if only it's fresh and juicy and has plenty of blood in it. [*Drinks from his pocket-flask.*

MAIA.

[*Regarding him fixedly.*] But you like bear-hunting best?

ULFHEIM.

I like it best, yes. For then one can have the knife handy at a pinch. [*With a slight smile.*] We both work

in a hard material, madam—both your husband and I. He struggles with his marble blocks, I daresay; and I struggle with tense and quivering bear-sinews. And we both of us win the fight in the end—subdue and master our material. We never rest till we've got the upper hand of it, though it fight never so hard.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Deep in thought.*] There's a great deal of truth in what you say.

ULFHEIM.

Yes, for I take it the stone has something to fight for too. It is dead, and determined by no manner of means to let itself be hammered into life. Just like the bear when you come and prod him up in his lair.

MAIA.

Are you going up into the forests now to hunt?

ULFHEIM.

I am going right up into the high mountains.—I suppose you have never been in the high mountains, madam?

MAIA.

No, never.

ULFHEIM.

Confound it all then, you must be sure and come up there this very summer! I'll take you with me—both you and the Professor, with pleasure.

MAIA.

Thanks. But Rubek is thinking of taking a sea trip this summer.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Round the coast—through the island channels.

ULFHEIM.

Ugh—what the devil would you do in those damnable sickly gutters—floundering about in the brackish ditch-water? Dishwater I should rather call it.

MAIA.

There, you hear, Rubek!

ULFHEIM.

No, much better come up with me to the mountains—away, clean away, from the trail and taint of men. You can't think what that means for m e. But such a little lady—— [*He stops.*

[*The* SISTER OF MERCY *comes out of the pavilion and goes into the hotel.*

ULFHEIM.

[*Following her with his eyes.*] Just look at her, do! That night-crow there!—Who is it that's to be buried?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I have not heard of any one——

ULFHEIM.

Well, there's some one on the point of giving up the ghost then—in one corner or another.—People that are sickly and rickety should have the goodness to see about getting themselves buried—the sooner the better.

MAIA.

Have you ever been ill yourself, Mr. Ulfheim.

ULFHEIM.

Never. If I had, I shouldn't be here.—But my nearest friends—t h e y have been ill, poor things.

MAIA.

And what did you do for your nearest friends?

ULFHEIM.

Shot them, of course.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looking at him.*] Shot them?

MAIA.

[*Moving her chair back.*] Shot them dead?

ULFHEIM.

[*Nods.*] I never miss, madam.

MAIA.

But how can you possibly shoot people!

ULFHEIM.

I am not speaking of people——

MAIA.

You said your nearest friends——

ULFHEIM.

Well, who should they be but my dogs?

MAIA.

Are your dogs your nearest friends?

ULFHEIM.

I have none nearer. My honest, trusty, absolutely loyal comrades—. When one of them turns sick and miserable—bang!—and there's my friend sent packing—to the other world.

[*The* SISTER OF MERCY *comes out of the hotel with a tray on which is bread and milk. She places it on the table outside the pavilion, which she enters.*

ULFHEIM.

[*Laughs scornfully.*] That stuff there—is that what you call food for human beings! Milk and water and soft, clammy bread. Ah, you should see my comrades feeding. Should you like to see it?

MAIA.

[*Smiling across to the* PROFESSOR *and rising.*] Yes, very much.

ULFHEIM.

[*Also rising.*] Spoken like a woman of spirit, madam! Come with me, then! They swallow whole great thumping meat-bones—gulp them up and then gulp them down again. Oh, it's a regular treat to see them. Come along and I'll show you—and while we're about it, we can talk over this trip to the mountains——

[*He goes out by the corner of the hotel,* MAIA *following him.*

[*Almost at the same moment the* STRANGE LADY *comes out of the pavilion and seats herself at the table.*

[THE LADY *raises her glass of milk and is about to drink, but stops and looks across at* RUBEK *with vacant, expressionless eyes.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Remains sitting at his table and gazes fixedly and earnestly at her. At last he rises, goes some steps towards her, stops, and says in a low voice.*] I know you quite well, Irene.

THE LADY.

[*In a toneless voice, setting down her glass.*] You can guess who I am, Arnold?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Without answering.*] And you recognise me, too, I see.

THE LADY.

With you it is quite another matter.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

With me?—How so?

THE LADY.

Oh, you are still alive.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Not understanding.*] Alive——?

THE LADY.

[*After a short pause.*] Who was the other? The woman you had with you—there at the table?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*A little reluctantly.*] She? That was my—my wife.

THE LADY.

[*Nods slowly.*] Indeed. That is well, Arnold. Some one, then, who does not concern me——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Nods.*] No, of course not——

THE LADY.

—One whom you have taken to you after m y lifetime.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Suddenly looking hard at her.*] After y o u r—? What do you mean by that, Irene?

IRENE.

[*Without answering.*] And the child? I hear the child is prospering too. Our child survives me—and has come to honour and glory.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Smiles as at a far-off recollection.*] Our child? Yes, we called it so—then.

IRENE.

In my lifetime, yes.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Trying to take a lighter tone.*] Yes, Irene.—I can assure you "our child" has become famous all the wide world over. I suppose you have read about it.

IRENE.

[*Nods.*] And has made its father famous too.—That was your dream.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*More softly, with emotion.*] It is to you I owe everything, everything, Irene—and I thank you.

IRENE.

[*Lost in thought for a moment.*] If I had then done what I had a right to do, Arnold——→

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Well? What then?

IRENE.

I should have killed that child.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Killed it, you say?

IRENE.

[*Whispering.*] Killed it—before I went away from you. Crushed it—crushed it to dust.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Shakes his head reproachfully.*] You would never have been able to, Irene. You had not the heart to do it.

IRENE.

No, in those days I had not that sort of heart.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

But since then? Afterwards?

IRENE.

Since then I have killed it innumerable times. By daylight and in the dark. Killed it in hatred—and in revenge—and in anguish.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Goes close up to the table and asks softly.*] Irene—tell me now at last—after all these years—why did you go away from me? You disappeared so utterly—left not a trace behind——

IRENE.

[*Shaking her head slowly.*] Oh Arnold—why should I tell you that now—from the world beyond the grave.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Was there some one else whom you had come to love?

IRENE.

There was one who had no longer any use for my love —any use for my life.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Changing the subject.*] H'm—don't let us talk any more of the past——

IRENE.

No, no—by all means let us not talk of what is beyond the grave—what is now beyond the grave for me.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Where have you been, Irene? All my inquiries were fruitless—you seemed to have vanished away.

IRENE.

I went into the darkness—when the child stood transfigured in the light.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Have you travelled much about the world?

IRENE.

Yes. Travelled in many lands.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looks compassionately at her.*] And what have you found to do, Irene?

IRENE.

[*Turning her eyes upon him.*] Wait a moment; let me see—. Yes, now I have it. I have posed on the turn-table in variety-shows. Posed as a naked statue in living pictures. Raked in heaps of money. That was more than I could do with you; for you had none.—And then I turned the heads of all sorts of men. That, too, was more than I could do with you, Arnold. You kept yourself better in hand.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Hastening to pass the subject by.*] And then you have married, too?

IRENE.

Yes; I married one of them.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Who is your husband?

IRENE.

He was a South American. A distinguished diplomatist. [*Looks straight in front of her with a stony smile.*] H i m I managed to drive quite out of his mind; mad—incurably mad; inexorably mad.—It was great sport, I can tell you—while it was in the doing. I could have laughed within me all the time—if I h a d anything within me.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And where is he now?

IRENE.

Oh, in a churchyard somewhere or other. With a fine handsome monument over him. And with a bullet rattling in his skull.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Did he kill himself?

IRENE.

Yes, he was good enough to take that off my hands.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Do you not lament his loss, Irene?

IRENE.

[*Not understanding.*] Lament? What loss?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Why, the loss of Herr von Satow, of course.

IRENE.

His name was not Satow.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Was it not?

IRENE.

My second husband is called Satow. He is a Russian——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And where is he?

IRENE.

Far away in the Ural Mountains. Among all his gold-mines.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

So he lives t h e r e?

IRENE.

[*Shrugs her shoulders.*] Lives? Lives? In reality I have killed him——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Starts.*] Killed——!

IRENE.

Killed him with a fine sharp dagger which I always have with me in bed——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Vehemently.*] I don't believe you, Irene!

IRENE.

[*With a gentle smile.*] Indeed you may believe it, Arnold.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looks compassionately at her.*] Have you never had a child?

IRENE.

Yes, I have had many children.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And where are your children now?

IRENE.

I killed them.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Severely.*] Now you are telling me lies again!

IRENE.

I have killed them, I tell you—murdered them pitilessly. As soon as ever they came into the world. Oh, long, long before. One after the other.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Sadly and earnestly.*] There is something hidden behind everything you say.

IRENE.

How can I help that? Every word I say is whispered into my ear.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I believe I am the only one that can divine your meaning.

IRENE.

Surely you ought to be the only one.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Rests his hands on the table and looks intently at her.*] Some of the strings of your nature have broken.

IRENE.

[*Gently.*] Does not that always happen when a young warm-blooded woman dies?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Oh Irene, have done with these wild imaginings—! You are living! Living—living!

IRENE.

[*Rises slowly from her chair and says, quivering.*] I was dead for many years. They came and bound me—laced my arms together behind my back— Then they lowered me into a grave-vault, with iron bars before the loop-hole. And with padded walls—so that no one on the earth above could hear the grave-shrieks— But now I am beginning, in a way, to rise from the dead.

[*She seats herself again.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*After a pause.*] In all this, do you hold me guilty?

IRENE.

Yes.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Guilty of that—your death, as you call it.

IRENE.

Guilty of the fact that I had to die. [*Changing her tone to one of indifference.*] Why don't you sit down, Arnold?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

May I?

IRENE.

Yes.—You need not be afraid of being frozen. I don't think I am quite turned to ice yet.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Moves a chair and seats himself at her table.*] There, Irene. Now we two are sitting together as in the old days.

IRENE.

A little way apart from each other—also as in the old days.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Moving nearer.*] It had to be so, then.

IRENE.

Had it?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Decisively.*] There had to be a distance between us——

IRENE.

Was it absolutely necessary, Arnold?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Continuing.*] Do you remember what you answered when I asked if you would go with me out into the wide world?

IRENE.

I held up three fingers in the air and swore that I would go with you to the world's end and to the end of life. And that I would serve you in all things——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

As the model for my art——

IRENE.

—In frank, utter nakedness——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With emotion.*] And you did serve me, Irene—so bravely—so gladly and ungrudgingly.

IRENE.

Yes, with all the pulsing blood of my youth, I served you!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Nodding, with a look of gratitude.*] That you have every right to say.

IRENE.

I fell down at your feet and served you, Arnold! [*Holding her clenched hand towards him.*] But you, you, —you——!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Defensively.*] I never did you any wrong! Never, Irene!

IRENE.

Yes, you did! You did wrong to my innermost, inborn nature——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Starting back.*] I——!

IRENE.

Yes, y o u! I exposed myself wholly and unreservedly to your gaze— [*More softly.*] And never once did you touch me.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Irene, did you not understand that many a time I was almost beside myself under the spell of all your loveliness?

IRENE.

[*Continuing undisturbed.*] And yet—if you h a d touched me, I think I should have killed you on the spot. For I had a sharp needle always upon me—hidden in my hair— [*Strokes her forehead meditatively.*] But after all—after all—that you could——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looks impressively at her.*] I was an artist, Irene.

IRENE.

[*Darkly.*] That is just it. That is just it.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

An artist first of all. And I was sick with the desire to achieve the great work of my life. [*Losing himself in recollection.*] It was to be called "The Resurrection Day"—figured in the likeness of a young woman, awakening from the sleep of death——

IRENE.

Our child, yes——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Continuing.*] It was to be the awakening of the noblest, purest, most ideal woman the world ever saw. Then I found y o u. You were what I required in every

respect. And you consented so willingly—so gladly. You renounced home and kindred—and went with me.

IRENE.

To go with you meant for me the resurrection of my childhood.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

That was just why I found in you all that I required—in you and in no one else. I came to look on you as a thing hallowed, not to be touched save in adoring thoughts. In those days I was still young, Irene. And the superstition took hold of me that if I touched you, if I desired you with my senses, my soul would be profaned, so that I should be unable to accomplish what I was striving for.—And I still think there was some truth in that.

IRENE.

[*Nods with a touch of scorn.*] The work of art first—then the human being.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

You must judge me as you will; but at that time I was utterly dominated by my great task—and exultantly happy in it.

IRENE.

And you achieved your great task, Arnold.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Thanks and praise be to you, I achieved my great task. I wanted to embody the pure woman as I saw

her awakening on the Resurrection Day. Not marvelling at anything new and unknown and undivined; but filled with a sacred joy at finding herself unchanged —she, the woman of earth—in the higher, freer, happier region—after the long, dreamless sleep of death. [*More softly.*] Thus did I fashion her.—I fashioned her in y o u r image, Irene.

IRENE.

[*Laying her hands flat upon the table and leaning against the back of her chair.*] And then you were done with me——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Reproachfully.*] Irene!

IRENE.

You had no longer any use for me——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

How c a n you say that!

IRENE.

—And began to look about you for other ideals——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I found none, none after you.

IRENE.

And no other models, Arnold?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

You were no model to me. You were the fountain-head of my achievement.

IRENE.

[*Is silent for a short time.*] What poems have you made since? In marble I mean. Since the day I left you.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I have made no poems since that day—only frittered away my life in modelling.

IRENE.

And that woman, whom you are now living with——?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Interrupting vehemently.*] Do not speak of her now! It makes me tingle with shame.

IRENE.

Where are you thinking of going with her?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Slack and weary.*] Oh, on a tedious coasting-voyage to the North, I suppose.

IRENE.

[*Looks at him, smiles almost imperceptibly, and whispers.*] You should rather go high up into the mountains. As high as ever you can. Higher, higher,—always higher, Arnold.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With eager expectation.*] Are you going up there?

IRENE.

Have you the courage to meet me once again?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Struggling with himself, uncertainly.*] If we could—oh, if only we could——!

IRENE.

Why can we not do what we will? [*Looks at him and whispers beseechingly with folded hands.*] Come, come, Arnold! Oh, come up to me——!

[MAIA *enters, glowing with pleasure, from behind the hotel, and goes quickly up to the table where they were previously sitting.*

MAIA.

[*Still at the corner of the hotel, without looking around.*] Oh, you may say what you please, Rubek, but—[*Stops, as she catches sight of* IRENE]—Oh, I beg your pardon—I see you have made an acquaintance.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Curtly.*] Renewed an acquaintance. [*Rises.*] What was it you wanted with me?

MAIA.

I only wanted to say this: you may do whatever you please, but *I* am not going with you on that disgusting steamboat.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Why not?

MAIA.

Because I want to go up on the mountains and into the forests—that's what I want. [*Coaxingly.*] Oh, you must let me do it, Rubek.—I shall be so good, so good afterwards!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Who is it that has put these ideas into your head?

MAIA.

Why h e—that horrid bear-killer. Oh you cannot conceive all the marvellous things he has to tell about the mountains. And about life up there! They're ugly, horrid, repulsive, most of the yarns he spins—for I almost believe he's lying—but wonderfully alluring all the same. Oh, won't you let me go with him? Only to see if what he says is true, you understand. M a y I, Rubek?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Yes, I have not the slightest objection. Off you go to the mountains—as far and as long as you please. I shall perhaps be going the same way myself.

MAIA.

[*Quickly.*] No, no, no, you needn't do that! Not on m y account!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I w a n t to go to the mountains. I have made up my mind to go.

MAIA.

Oh thanks, thanks! May I tell the bear-killer at once?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Tell the bear-killer whatever you please.

MAIA.

Oh thanks, thanks, thanks! [*Is about to take his hand; he repels the movement.*] Oh, how dear and good you are to-day, Rubek!

[*She runs into the hotel.*

[*At the same time the door of the pavilion is softly and noiselessly set ajar.* THE SISTER OF MERCY *stands in the opening, intently on the watch. No one sees her.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Decidedly, turning to* IRENE.] Shall we meet up there then?

IRENE.

[*Rising slowly.*] Yes, we shall certainly meet.—I have sought for you so long.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

When did you begin to seek for me, Irene?

IRENE.

[*With a touch of jesting bitterness.*] From the moment I realised that I had given away to you something rather

indispensable, Arnold. Something one ought never to part with.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Bowing his head.*] Yes, that is bitterly true. You gave me three or four years of your youth.

IRENE.

More, more than t h a t I gave you—spendthrift as I then was.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Yes, you were prodigal, Irene. You gave me all your naked loveliness——

IRENE.

—To gaze upon——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

—And to glorify——

IRENE.

Yes, for your own glorification.—And the child's.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And yours too, Irene.

IRENE.

But you have forgotten the most precious gift.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

The most precious—? What gift was t h a t?

IRENE.

I gave you my young, living soul. And that gift left me empty within—soulless. [*Looking at him with a fixed stare.*] It was t h a t I died of, Arnold.

[*The* SISTER OF MERCY *opens the door wide and makes room for her. She goes into the pavilion.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Stands and looks after her; then whispers.*] Irene!

ACT SECOND

Near a mountain health resort. The landscape stretches, in the form of an immense treeless upland, towards a long mountain lake. Beyond the lake rises a range of peaks with blue-white snow in the clefts. In the foreground on the left a purling brook falls in severed streamlets down a steep wall of rock, and thence flows smoothly over the upland until it disappears to the right. Dwarf trees, plants, and stones along the course of the brook. In the foreground on the right a hillock, with a stone bench on the top of it. It is a summer afternoon, towards sunset.

At some distance over the upland, on the other side of the brook, a troop of children is singing, dancing, and playing. Some are dressed in peasant costume, others in town-made clothes. Their happy laughter is heard, softened by distance, during the following.

PROFESSOR RUBEK *is sitting on the bench, with a plaid over his shoulders, and looking down at the children's play.*

Presently MAIA *comes forward from among some bushes on the upland to the left, well back, and scans the prospect with her hand shading her eyes. She wears a flat tourist cap, a short skirt, kilted up, reaching only midway between ankle and knee, and high, stout lace-boots. She has in her hand a long alpenstock.*

MAIA.

[*At last catches sight of* RUBEK *and calls.*] Hallo!

[*She advances over the upland, jumps over the brook, with the aid of her alpenstock, and climbs up the hillock.*

MAIA.

[*Panting.*] Oh, how I have been rushing around looking for you, Rubek.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Nods indifferently and asks.*] Have you just come from the hotel?

MAIA.

Yes, that was the last place I tried—that fly-trap.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looking at her for a moment.*] I noticed that you were not at the dinner-table.

MAIA.

No, we had our dinner in the open air, we two.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

"We two"? What two?

MAIA.

Why, I and that horrid bear-killer, of course.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Oh, he.

MAIA.

Yes. And first thing to-morrow morning we are going off again.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

After bears?

MAIA.

Yes. Off to kill a brown-boy.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Have you found the tracks of any?

MAIA.

[*With superiority.*] You don't suppose that bears are to be found in the naked mountains, do you?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Where, then?

MAIA.

Far beneath. On the lower slopes; in the thickest parts of the forest. Places your ordinary town-folk could never get through——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And you two are going down there to-morrow?

MAIA.

[*Throwing herself down among the heather.*] Yes, so we have arranged.—Or perhaps we may start this evening.—If you have no objection, that's to say?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I? Far be it from me to——

MAIA.

[*Quickly.*] Of course Lars goes with us—with the dogs.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I feel no curiosity as to the movements of Mr. Lars and his dogs. [*Changing the subject.*] Would you not rather sit properly on the seat?

MAIA.

[*Drowsily.*] No, thank you. I'm lying so delightfully in the soft heather.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I can see that you are tired.

MAIA.

[*Yawning.*] I almost think I'm beginning to feel tired.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

You don't notice it till afterwards—when the excitement is over——

MAIA.

[*In a drowsy tone.*] Just so. I will lie and close my eyes. [*A short pause.*

MAIA.

[*With sudden impatience.*] Ugh, Rubek—how can you endure to sit there listening to these children's screams! And to watch all the capers they are cutting, too!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

There is something harmonious—almost like music—in their movements, now and then; amid all the clumsi-

ness. And it amuses me to sit and watch for these isolated moments—when they come.

MAIA.

[*With a somewhat scornful laugh.*] Yes, you are always, always an artist.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And I propose to remain one.

MAIA.

[*Lying on her side, so that her back is turned to him.*] There's not a bit of the artist about h i m,

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With attention.*] Who is it that's not an artist?

MAIA.

[*Again in a sleepy tone.*] Why, he—the other one, of course.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

The bear-hunter, you mean?

MAIA.

Yes. There's not a bit of the artist about him—not the least little bit.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Smiling.*] No, I believe there's no doubt about that.

MAIA.

[*Vehemently, without moving.*] And so ugly as he is! [*Plucks up a tuft of heather and throws it away.*] So ugly, so ugly! Isch!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Is that why you are so ready to set off with him—out into the wilds?

MAIA.

[*Curtly.*] I don't know. [*Turning towards him.*] You are ugly, too, Rubek.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Have you only just discovered it?

MAIA.

No, I have seen it for long.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] One doesn't grow younger. One doesn't grow younger, Frau Maia.

MAIA.

It's not that sort of ugliness that I mean at all. But there has come to be such an expression of fatigue, of utter weariness, in your eyes—when you deign, once in a while, to cast a glance at me.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Have you noticed that?

MAIA.

[*Nods.*] Little by little this evil look has come into your eyes. It seems almost as though you were nursing some dark plot against me.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Indeed? [*In a friendly but earnest tone.*] Come here and sit beside me, Maia; and let us talk a little.

MAIA.

[*Half rising.*] Then will you let me sit upon your knee? As I used to in the early days?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

No, you mustn't—people can see us from the hotel. [*Moves a little.*] But you can sit here on the bench—at my side.

MAIA.

No, thank you; in that case I'd rather lie here, where I am. I can hear you quite well here. [*Looks inquiringly at him.*] Well, what is it you want to say to me?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Begins slowly.*] What do you think was my real reason for agreeing to make this tour?

MAIA.

Well—I remember you declared, among other things, that it was going to do me such a tremendous lot of good. But—but——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

But——?

MAIA.

But now I don't believe the least little bit that that was the reason——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Then what is your theory about it now?

MAIA.

I think now that it was on account of that pale lady.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Madame von Satow——!

MAIA.

Yes, she who is always hanging at our heels. Yesterday evening she made her appearance up here too.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

But what in all the world——!

MAIA.

Oh, I know you knew her very well indeed—long before you knew me.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And had forgotten her, too—long before I knew you.

MAIA.

[*Sitting upright.*] Can you forget so easily, Rubek?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Curtly.*] Yes, very easily indeed. [*Adds harshly.*] When I w a n t to forget.

MAIA.

Even a woman who has been a model to you?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

When I have no more use for her——

MAIA.

One who has stood to you undressed?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

That means nothing—nothing for us artists. [*With a change of tone.*] And then—may I venture to ask—how was *I* to guess that she was in this country?

MAIA.

Oh, you might have seen her name in a Visitors' List —in one of the newspapers.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

But I had no idea of the name she now goes by. I had never heard of any Herr von Satow.

MAIA.

[*Affecting weariness.*] Oh well then, I suppose it must have been for some other reason that you were so set upon this journey.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Seriously.*] Yes, Maia—it was for another reason. A quite different reason. And t h a t is what we must sooner or later have a clear explanation about.

MAIA.

[*In a fit of suppressed laughter.*] Heavens, how solemn you look!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Suspiciously scrutinising her.*] Yes, perhaps a little more solemn than necessary.

MAIA.

How so——?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And t h a t is a very good thing for us both.

MAIA.

You begin to make me feel curious, Rubek.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Only curious? Not a little bit uneasy.

MAIA.

[*Shaking her head.*] Not in the least.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Good. Then listen.—You said that day down at the Baths that it seemed to you I had become very nervous of late——

MAIA.

Yes, and you really have.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And what do you think can be the reason of t h a t?

MAIA.

How can I tell——? [*Quickly.*] Perhaps you have grown weary of this constant companionship with me.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Constant—? Why not say "everlasting"?

MAIA.

Daily companionship, then. Here have we two solitary people lived down there for four or five mortal years, and scarcely been an hour away from each other.—We two all by ourselves.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With interest.*] Well? And then——?

MAIA.

[*A little oppressed.*] You are not a particularly sociable man, Rubek. You like to keep yourself to yourself and think your own thoughts. And of course I can't talk properly to y o u about y o u r affairs. I know nothing about art and that sort of thing— [*With an impatient gesture.*] And care very little either, for that matter!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Well, well; and that's why we generally sit by the fireside, and chat about y o u r affairs.

MAIA.

Oh, good gracious—I have no affairs to chat about.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Well, they are trifles, perhaps; but at any rate the time passes for us in that way as well as another, Maia.

MAIA.

Yes, you are right. Time passes. It is passing away from you, Rubek.—And I suppose it is really t h a t that makes you so uneasy——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Nods vehemently.*] And so restless! [*Writhing in his seat.*] No, I shall soon not be able to endure this pitiful life any longer.

MAIA.

[*Rises and stands for a moment looking at him.*] If you want to get rid of me, you have only to say so.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Why w i l l you use such phrases? Get rid of you?

MAIA.

Yes, if you want to have done with me, please say so right out. And I will go that instant.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With an almost imperceptible smile.*] Do you intend that as a threat, Maia?

MAIA.

There can be no threat for you in what I said.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Rising.*] No, I confess you are right there. [*Adds after a pause.*] You and I cannot possibly go on living together like this——

MAIA.

Well? And then——?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

There is no "then" about it. [*With emphasis on his words.*] Because we two cannot go on living together a l o n e—it does not necessarily follow that we must part.

MAIA.

[*Smiles scornfully.*] Only draw away from each other a little, you mean?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Shakes his head.*] Even that is not necessary.

MAIA.

Well then? Come out with what you want to do with me.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With some hesitation.*] What I now feel so keenly—and so painfully—that I require, is to have some one about me who really and truly stands close to me——

MAIA.

[*Interrupts him anxiously.*] Don't *I* do that, Rubek?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Waving her aside.*] Not in that sense. What I need is the companionship of another person who can, as it were, complete me—supply what is wanting in me—be o n e with me in all my striving.

MAIA.

[*Slowly.*] It's true that things like that are a great deal too hard for me.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Oh no, they are not at all in your line, Maia.

MAIA.

[*With an outburst.*] And heaven knows I don't want them to be, either!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I know that very well.—And it was with no idea of finding any such help in my life-work that I married you.

MAIA.

[*Observing him closely.*] I can see in your face that you are thinking of some one else.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Indeed? I have never noticed before that you were a thought-reader. But you can see t h a t, can you?

MAIA.

Yes, I can. Oh, I know you so well, so well, Rubek.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Then perhaps you can also see w h o it is I am thinking of?

MAIA.

Yes, indeed I can.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Well? Have the goodness to——?

MAIA.

You are thinking of that—that model you once used for— [*Suddenly letting slip the train of thought.*] Do you know, the people down at the hotel think she's mad.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Indeed? And pray what do the people down at the hotel think of you and the bear-killer?

MAIA.

That has nothing to do with the matter. [*Continuing the former train of thought.*] But it was this pale lady you were thinking of.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Calmly.*] Precisely, of her.—When I had no more use for her—and when, besides, she went away from me —vanished without a word——

MAIA.

Then you accepted me as a sort of makeshift, I suppose?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*More unfeelingly.*] Something of the sort, to tell the truth, little Maia. For a year or a year and a half I had lived there lonely and brooding, and had put the last touch—the very last touch, to my work. "The Resurrection Day" went out over the world and brought me fame—and everything else that heart could desire. [*With greater warmth.*] But I no longer loved my own work. Men's laurels and incense nauseated me, till I could have rushed away in despair and hidden myself in the depths of the woods. [*Looking at her.*] You, who are a thought-reader—can you guess what then occurred to me?

MAIA.

[*Lightly.*] Yes, it occurred to you to make portrait-busts of gentlemen and ladies.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Nods.*] To order, yes. With animals' faces behind the masks. T h o s e I threw in gratis—into the bargain, you understand. [*Smiling.*] But that was not precisely what I had in my mind.

MAIA.

What, then?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Again serious.*] It was t h i s, that all the talk about the artist's vocation and the artist's mission, and so forth, began to strike me as being very empty, and hollow, and meaningless at bottom.

MAIA.

Then what would you put in its place?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Life, Maia.

MAIA.

Life?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Yes, is not life in sunshine and in beauty a hundred times better worth while than to hang about to the end of your days in a raw, damp hole, and wear yourself out in a perpetual struggle with lumps of clay and blocks of stone?

MAIA.

[*With a little sigh.*] Yes, I have always thought so, certainly.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And then I had become rich enough to live in luxury and in indolent, quivering sunshine. I was able to build myself the villa on the Lake of Taunitz, and the palazzo in the capital,—and all the rest of it.

MAIA.

[*Taking up his tone.*] And last but not least, you could afford to treat yourself to me, too. And you gave me leave to share in all your treasures.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Jesting, so as to turn the conversation.*] Did I not promise to take you up with me to a high mountain and show you all the glory of the world?

MAIA.

[*With a gentle expression.*] You have perhaps taken me up with you to a high enough mountain, Rubek—but you have not shown me all the glory of the world.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With a laugh of irritation.*] How insatiable you are, Maia! Absolutely insatiable! [*With a vehement outburst.*] But do you know what is the most hopeless thing of all, Maia? Can you guess that?

MAIA.

[*With quiet defiance.*] Yes, I suppose it is that you have gone and tied yourself to me—for life.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I would not have expressed myself so heartlessly.

MAIA.

But you would have meant it just as heartlessly.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

You have no clear idea of the inner workings of an artist's nature.

MAIA.

[*Smiling and shaking her head.*] Good heavens, I haven't even a clear idea of the inner workings of my own nature.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Continuing undisturbed.*] I live at such high speed, Maia. We live so, we artists. I, for my part, have lived through a whole lifetime in the few years we two have known each other. I have come to realise that I am not at all adapted for seeking happiness in indolent enjoyment. Life does not shape itself that way for me and those like me. I must go on working—producing one work after another—right up to my dying day. [*Forcing himself to continue.*] That is why I cannot get on with you any longer, Maia—not with you alone.

MAIA.

[*Quietly.*] Does that mean, in plain language, that you have grown tired of me?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Bursts forth.*] Yes, that is what it means! I have grown tired—intolerably tired and fretted and unstrung—in this life with you! Now you know it. [*Controlling himself.*] These are hard, ugly words I am using. I know that very well. And you are not at all to blame in this matter;—that I willingly admit. It is simply and solely I myself, who have once more undergone a revolution—[*Half to himself*]—an awakening to my real life.

MAIA.

[*Involuntarily folding her hands.*] Why in all the world should we not part then?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looks at her in astonishment.*] Should you be willing to?

MAIA.

[*Shrugging her shoulders.*] Oh yes—if there's nothing else for it, then——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Eagerly.*] But there is something else for it. There is an alternative——

MAIA.

[*Holding up her forefinger.*] Now you are thinking of the pale lady again!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Yes, to tell the truth, I cannot help constantly thinking of her. Ever since I met her again. [*A step nearer her.*] For now I will tell you a secret, Maia.

MAIA.

Well?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Touching his own breast.*] In here, you see—in here I have a little bramah-locked casket. And in that casket all my sculptor's visions are stored up. But when she disappeared and left no trace, the lock of the casket snapped to. And she had the key—and she took it away

with her.—You, little Maia, you had no key; so all that the casket contains must lie unused. And the years pass! And I have no means of getting at the treasure.

MAIA.

[*Trying to repress a subtle smile.*] Then get her to open the casket for you again——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Not understanding.*] Maia——?

MAIA.

—for here she is, you see. And no doubt it's on account of this casket that she has come.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I have not said a single word to her on this subject!

MAIA.

[*Looks innocently at him.*] My dear Rubek—is it worth while to make all this fuss and commotion about so simple a matter?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Do you think this matter is so absolutely simple?

MAIA.

Yes, certainly I think so. Do you attach yourself to whoever you most require. [*Nods to him.*] I shall always manage to find a place for myself.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Where do you mean?

MAIA.

[*Unconcerned, evasively.*] Well—I need only take myself off to the villa, if it should be necessary. But it won't be; for in town—in all that great house of ours—there must surely, with a little good will, be room enough for three.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Uncertainly.*] And do you think t h a t would work in the long run?

MAIA.

[*In a light tone.*] Very well, then—if it won't work, it won't. It is no good talking about it.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And what shall we do then, Maia—if it does n o t work?

MAIA.

[*Untroubled.*] Then we two will simply get out of each other's way—part entirely. I shall always find something new for myself, somewhere in the world. Something free! Free! Free!—No need to be anxious about t h a t, Professor Rubek! [*Suddenly points off to the right.*] Look t h e r e! There we have her.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Turning.*] Where?

MAIA.

Out on the plain. Striding—like a marble statue. She is coming this way.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Stands gazing with his hand over his eyes.*] Does not she look like the Resurrection incarnate? [*To himself.*] And h e r I could displace—and move into the shade! Remodel her— Fool that I was!

MAIA.

What do you mean by that?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Putting the question aside.*] Nothing. Nothing that you would understand.

[IRENE *advances from the right over the upland. The children at their play have already caught sight of her and run to meet her. She is now surrounded by them; some appear confident and at ease, others uneasy and timid. She talks low to them and indicates that they are to go down to the hotel; she herself will rest a little beside the brook. The children run down over the slope to the left, half way to the back.* IRENE *goes up to the wall of rock, and lets the rillets of the cascade flow over her hands, cooling them.*

MAIA.

[*In a low voice.*] Go down and speak to her alone, Rubek.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And where will you go in the meantime?

MAIA.

[*Looking significantly at him.*] Henceforth I shall go my own ways.

[*She descends from the hillock and leaps over the brook, by aid of her alpenstock. She stops beside* IRENE.

MAIA.

Professor Rubek is up there, waiting for you, madam.

IRENE.

What does he want?

MAIA.

He wants you to help him to open a casket that has snapped to.

IRENE.

Can I help him in that?

MAIA.

He says you are the only person that can.

IRENE.

Then I must try.

MAIA.

Yes, you really must, madam.

[*She goes down by the path to the hotel.*

[*In a little while* PROFESSOR RUBEK *comes down to* IRENE, *but stops with the brook between them.*

IRENE.

[*After a short pause.*] She—the other one—said that you had been waiting for me.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I have waited for you year after year—without myself knowing it.

IRENE.

I could not come to you, Arnold. I was lying down there, sleeping the long, deep, dreamful sleep.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

But now you have awakened, Irene!

IRENE.

[*Shakes her head.*] I have the heavy, deep sleep still in my eyes.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

You shall see that day will dawn and lighten for us both.

IRENE.

Do not believe that.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Urgently.*] I do believe it! And I know it! Now that I have found you again——

IRENE.

Risen from the grave.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Transfigured!

IRENE.

Only risen, Arnold. Not transfigured.

[*He crosses over to her by means of stepping-stones below the cascade.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Where have you been all day, Irene?

IRENE.

[*Pointing.*] Far, far over there, on the great dead waste——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Turning the conversation.*] You have not your—your friend with you to-day, I see.

IRENE.

[*Smiling.*] My friend is keeping a close watch on me, none the less.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Can she?

IRENE.

[*Glancing furtively around.*] You may be sure she can —wherever I may go. She never loses sight of me— [*Whispering.*] Until, one fine sunny morning, I shall kill her.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Would you do that?

IRENE.

With the utmost delight—if only I could manage it.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Why do you want to?

IRENE.

Because she deals in witchcraft. [*Mysteriously.*] Only think, Arnold—she has changed herself into my shadow.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Trying to calm her.*] Well, well, well—a shadow we must all have.

IRENE.

I am my own shadow. [*With an outburst.*] Do you not understand that!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Sadly.*] Yes, yes, Irene, I understand it.

[*He seats himself on a stone beside the brook. She stands behind him, leaning against the wall of rock.*

IRENE.

[*After a pause.*] Why do you sit there turning your eyes away from me?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Softly, shaking his head.*] I dare not—I dare not look at you.

IRENE.

Why dare you not look at me any more?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

You have a shadow that tortures me. And *I* have the crushing weight of my conscience.

IRENE.

[*With a glad cry of deliverance.*] At last!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Springs up.*] Irene—what is it!

IRENE.

[*Motioning him off.*] Keep still, still, still! [*Draws a deep breath and says, as though relieved of a burden.*] There! Now they let me go. For this time.—Now we can sit down and talk as we used to—when I was alive.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Oh, if only we could talk as we used to.

IRENE.

Sit there, where you were sitting. I will sit here beside you.

[*He sits down again. She seats herself on another stone, close to him.*

IRENE.

[*After a short interval of silence.*] Now I have come back to you from the uttermost regions, Arnold.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Aye, truly, from an endless journey.

IRENE.

Come home to my lord and master——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

To our home;—to our own home, Irene.

IRENE.

Have you looked for my coming every single day?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

How dared I look for you?

IRENE.

[*With a sidelong glance.*] No, I suppose you dared not. For you understood nothing.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Was it really not for the sake of some one else that you all of a sudden disappeared from me in that way?

IRENE.

Might it not quite well be for y o u r sake, Arnold?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looks doubtfully at her.*] I don't understand you——?

IRENE.

When I had served you with my soul and with my body—when the statue stood there finished—our child

as you called it—then I laid at your feet the most precious sacrifice of all—by effacing myself for all time.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Bows his head.*] And laying my life waste.

IRENE.

[*Suddenly firing up.*] It was just t h a t I wanted! Never, never should you create anything again—after you had created that only child of ours.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Was it jealousy that moved you, then?

IRENE.

[*Coldly.*] I think it was rather hatred.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Hatred? Hatred for me?

IRENE.

[*Again vehemently.*] Yes, for you—for the artist who had so lightly and carelessly taken a warm-blooded body, a young human life, and worn the soul out of it—because you needed it for a work of art.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And y o u can say that—you who threw yourself into my work with such saint-like passion and such ardent joy?—that work for which we two met together every morning, as for an act of worship.

IRENE.

[*Coldly, as before.*] I will tell you one thing, Arnold.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Well?

IRENE.

I never loved your art, before I met you.—Nor after either.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

But the artist, Irene?

IRENE.

The artist I hate.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

The artist in me too?

IRENE.

In you most of all. When I unclothed myself and stood for you, then I hated you, Arnold——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Warmly.*] That you did not, Irene! That is not true!

IRENE.

I hated you, because you could stand there so unmoved——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Laughs.*] Unmoved? Do you think so?

IRENE.

—at any rate so intolerably self-controlled. And because you were an artist and an artist only—not a man! [*Changing to a tone full of warmth and feeling.*] But that statue in the wet, living clay, t h a t I loved—as it rose up, a vital human creature, out of those raw, shapeless masses—for t h a t was our creation, o u r child. Mine and yours.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Sadly.*] It was so in spirit and in truth.

IRENE.

Let me tell you, Arnold—it is for the sake of this child of ours that I have undertaken this long pilgrimage.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Suddenly alert.*] For the statue's——?

IRENE.

Call it what you will. I call it our child.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And now you want to see it? Finished? In marble, which you always thought so cold? [*Eagerly.*] You do not know, perhaps, that it is installed in a great museum somewhere—far out in the world?

IRENE.

I have heard a sort of legend about it.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And museums were always a horror to you. You called them grave-vaults——

IRENE.

I will make a pilgrimage to the place where my soul and my child's soul lie buried.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Uneasy and alarmed.*] You must never see that statue again! Do you hear, Irene! I implore you—! Never, never see it again!

IRENE.

Perhaps you think it would mean death to me a second time?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Clenching his hands together.*] Oh, I don't know what I think.—But how could I ever imagine that you would fix your mind so immovably on that statue? You, who went away from me—before it was completed.

IRENE.

It w a s completed. That was why I could go away from you—and leave you alone.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Sits with his elbows upon his knees, rocking his head from side to side, with his hands before his eyes.*] It was not what it afterwards became.

IRENE.

[*Quietly, but quick as lightning, half-unsheathes a narrow-bladed sharp knife which she carries in her breast, and asks in a hoarse whisper.*] Arnold—have you done any evil to our child?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Evasively.*] Any evil?—How can I be sure what y o u would call it?

IRENE.

[*Breathless.*] Tell me at once: what have you done to the child?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I will tell you, if you will sit and listen quietly to what I say.

IRENE.

[*Hides the knife.*] I will listen as quietly as a mother can when she——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Interrupting.*] And you must not look at me while I am telling you.

IRENE.

[*Moves to a stone behind his back.*] I will sit here, behind you.—Now tell me.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Takes his hands from before his eyes and gazes straight in front of him.*] When I had found you, I knew at once how I should make use of you for my life-work.

IRENE.

"The Resurrection Day" you called your life-work.—I call it "our child."

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I was young then—with no knowledge of life. The Resurrection, I thought, would be most beautifully and exquisitely figured as a young unsullied woman—with none of our earth-life's experiences—awakening to light and glory without having to put away from her anything ugly and impure.

IRENE.

[*Quickly.*] Yes—and so I stand there now, in our work?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Hesitating.*] Not absolutely and entirely so, Irene.

IRENE.

[*In rising excitement.*] Not absolutely—? Do I not stand as I always stood for you?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Without answering.*] I learned worldly wisdom in the years that followed, Irene. "The Resurrection Day" became in my mind's eye something more and something —something more complex. The little round plinth on which your figure stood erect and solitary—it no longer afforded room for all the imagery I now wanted to add——

IRENE.

[*Gropes for her knife, but desists.*] What imagery did you add then? Tell me!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I imaged that which I saw with my eyes around me in the world. I had to include it—I could not help it, Irene. I expanded the plinth—made it wide and spacious. And on it I placed a segment of the curving, bursting earth. And up from the fissures of the soil there now swarm men and women with dimly-suggested animal-faces. Women and men—as I knew them in real life.

IRENE.

[*In breathless suspense.*] But in the middle of the rout there stands the young woman radiant with the joy of light?—Do I not stand so, Arnold?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Evasively.*] Not quite in the middle. I had unfortunately to move that figure a little back. For the sake of the general effect, you understand. Otherwise it would have dominated the whole too much.

IRENE.

But the joy in the light still transfigures my face?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Yes, it does, Irene—in a way. A little subdued perhaps—as my altered idea required.

IRENE.

[*Rising noiselessly.*] That design expresses the life you now see, Arnold.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Yes, I suppose it does.

IRENE.

And in that design you have shifted me back, a little toned down—to serve as a background-figure—in a group. [*She draws the knife.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Not a background-figure. Let us say, at most, a figure not quite in the foreground—or something of that sort.

IRENE.

[*Whispers hoarsely.*] There you uttered your own doom. [*On the point of striking.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Turns and looks up at her.*] Doom?

IRENE.

[*Hastily hides the knife, and says as though choked with agony.*] My whole soul—you and I—we, we, we and our child were in that solitary figure.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Eagerly, taking off his hat and drying the drops of sweat upon his brow.*] Yes, but let me tell you, too, how

I have placed m y s e l f in the group. In front, beside a fountain—as it were here—sits a man weighed down with guilt, who cannot quite free himself from the earth-crust. I call him remorse for a forfeited life. He sits there and dips his fingers in the purling stream—to wash them clean—and he is gnawed and tortured by the thought that never, never will he succeed. Never in all eternity will he attain to freedom and the new life. He will remain for ever prisoned in his hell.

IRENE.

[*Hardly and coldly.*] Poet!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Why poet?

IRENE.

Because you are nerveless and sluggish and full of forgiveness for all the sins of your life, in thought and in act. You have killed my soul—so you model yourself in remorse, and self-accusation, and penance—[*Smiling.*] —and with that you think your account is cleared.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Defiantly.*] I am an artist, Irene. And I take no shame to myself for the frailties that perhaps cling to me. For I was b o r n to be an artist, you see. And, do what I may, I shall never be anything else.

IRENE.

[*Looks at him with a lurking evil smile, and says gently and softly.*] You are a poet, Arnold. [*Softly strokes his*

hair.] You dear, great, middle-aged child,—is it possible that you cannot see t h a t!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Annoyed.*] Why do you keep on calling me a poet?

IRENE.

[*With malign eyes.*] Because there is something apologetic in the word, my friend. Something that suggests forgiveness of sins—and spreads a cloak over all frailty. [*With a sudden change of tone.*] But *I* was a human being—then! And I, too, had a life to live,—and a human destiny to fulfil. And all that, look you, I let slip—gave it all up in order to make myself your bondwoman.—Oh, it was self-murder—a deadly sin against myself! [*Half whispering.*] And that sin I can never expiate!

[*She seats herself near him beside the brook, keeps close, though unnoticed, watch upon him, and, as though in absence of mind, plucks some flowers from the shrubs around them.*

IRENE.

[*With apparent self-control.*] I should have borne children into the world—many children—real children—not such children as are hidden away in grave-vaults. That was my vocation. I ought never to have served you—poet.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Lost in recollection.*] Yet those were beautiful days, Irene. Marvellously beautiful days—as I now look back upon them——

IRENE.

[*Looking at him with a soft expression.*] Can you remember a little word that you said—when you had finished—finished with me and with our child? [*Nods to him.*] Can you remember that little word, Arnold?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looks inquiringly at her.*] Did I say a little word then, which you still remember?

IRENE.

Yes, you did. Can you not recall it?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Shaking his head.*] No, I can't say that I do. Not at the present moment, at any rate.

IRENE.

You took both my hands and pressed them warmly. And I stood there in breathless expectation. And then you said: "So now, Irene, I thank you from my heart. This," you said, "has been a priceless episode for me."

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looks doubtfully at her.*] Did I say "episode"? It is not a word I am in the habit of using.

IRENE.

You said "episode."

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With assumed cheerfulness.*] Well, well—after all, it w a s in reality an episode.

IRENE.

[*Curtly.*] At t h a t word I left you.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

You take everything so painfully to heart, Irene.

IRENE.

[*Drawing her hand over her forehead.*] Perhaps you are right. Let us shake off all the hard things that go to the heart. [*Plucks off the leaves of a mountain rose and strews them on the brook.*] Look there, Arnold. There are our birds swimming.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

What birds are they?

IRENE.

Can you not see? Of course they are flamingoes. Are they not rose-red?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Flamingoes do not swim. They only wade.

IRENE.

Then they are not flamingoes. They are sea-gulls.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

They may be sea-gulls with red bills, yes. [*Plucks broad green leaves and throws them into the brook.*] Now I send out my ships after them.

IRENE.

But there must be no harpoon-men on board.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

No, there shall be no harpoon-men. [*Smiles to her.*] Can you remember the summer when we used to sit like this outside the little peasant hut on the Lake of Taunitz?

IRENE.

[*Nods.*] On Saturday evenings, yes,—when we had finished our week's work——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

—And taken the train out to the lake—to stay there over Sunday——

IRENE.

[*With an evil gleam of hatred in her eyes.*] It was an episode, Arnold.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*As if not hearing.*] Then, too, you used to set birds swimming in the brook. They were water-lilies which you——

IRENE.

They were white swans.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I meant swans, yes. And I remember that I fastened a great furry leaf to one of the swans. It looked like a burdock-leaf——

IRENE.

And then it turned into Lohengrin's boat—with the swan yoked to it.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

How fond you were of that game, Irene.

IRENE.

We played it over and over again.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Every single Saturday, I believe,—all the summer through.

IRENE.

You said I was the swan that drew your boat.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Did I say so? Yes, I daresay I did. [*Absorbed in the game.*] Just see how the sea-gulls are swimming down the stream!

IRENE.

[*Laughing.*] And all your ships have run ashore.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Throwing more leaves into the brook.*] I have ships enough in reserve. [*Follows the leaves with his eyes,*

throws more into the brook, and says after a pause.] Irene,—I have bought the little peasant hut beside the Lake of Taunitz.

IRENE.

Have you bought it? You often said you would, if you could afford it.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

The day came when I could afford it easily enough; and so I bought it.

IRENE.

[*With a sidelong look at him.*] Then do you live out there now—in our old house?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

No, I have had it pulled down long ago. And I have built myself a great, handsome, comfortable villa on the site—with a park around it. It is there that we—[*Stops and corrects himself.*]—there that I usually live during the summer.

IRENE.

[*Mastering herself.*] So you and—and the other one live out there now?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*With a touch of defiance.*] Yes. When my wife and I are not travelling—as we are this year.

IRENE.

[*Looking far before her.*] Life was beautiful, beautiful by the Lake of Taunitz.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*As though looking back into himself.*] And yet, Irene——

IRENE.

[*Completing his thought.*] —Yet we two let slip all that life and its beauty.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Softly, urgently.*] Does repentance come too late, now?

IRENE.

[*Does not answer, but sits silent for a moment; then she points over the upland.*] Look there, Arnold,—now the sun is going down behind the peaks. See what a red glow the level rays cast over all the heathery knolls out yonder.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looks where she is pointing.*] It is long since I have seen a sunset in the mountains.

IRENE.

Or a sunrise?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

A sunrise I don't think I have ever seen.

IRENE.

[*Smiles as though lost in recollection.*] *I* once saw a marvellously lovely sunrise.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Did you? Where was t h a t ?

IRENE.

High, high up on a dizzy mountain-top.—You beguiled me up there by promising that I should see all the glory of the world if only I—— [*She stops suddenly.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

If only you—? Well?

IRENE.

I did as you told me—went with you up to the heights. And there I fell upon my knees, and worshipped you, and served you. [*Is silent for a moment; then says softly.*] T h e n I saw the sunrise.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Turning the conversation.*] Should you not like to come and live with us in the villa down there?

IRENE.

[*Looks at him with a scornful smile.*] With you—and the other woman?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Urgently.*] With m e—as in our days of creation. You could open all that is locked up in me. Can you not find it in your heart, Irene?

IRENE.

[*Shaking her head.*] I have no longer the key to you, Arnold.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

You h a v e the key! You and you alone possess it! [*Beseechingly.*] Help me—that I may be able to live my life over again!

IRENE.

[*Immovable as before.*] Empty dreams! Idle—dead dreams. For the life you and I led there is no resurrection.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Curtly, breaking off.*] Then let us go on playing.

IRENE.

Yes, playing, playing—only playing!

[*They sit and strew leaves and petals over the brook, where they float and sail away.*

[*Up the slope to the left at the back come* ULFHEIM *and* MAIA *in hunting costume. After them comes the* SERVANT *with the leash of dogs, with which he goes out to the right.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Catching sight of them.*] Ah! there is little Maia, going out with the bear-hunter.

IRENE.

Your lady, yes.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Or the other's.

MAIA.

[*Looks around as she is crossing the upland, sees the two sitting by the brook, and calls out.*] Good-night, Professor! Dream of me. Now I am going off on my adventures!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Calls back to her.*] What sort of an adventure is this to be?

MAIA.

[*Approaching.*] I am going to let l i f e take the place of all the rest.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Mockingly.*] Aha! so y o u too are going to do that, little Maia?

MAIA.

Yes. And I've made a verse about it, and this is how it goes:

[*Sings triumphantly*]

I am free! I am free! I am free!
No more life in the prison for me!
I am free as a bird! I am free!
For I believe I have awakened now—at last.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

It almost seems so.

MAIA.

[*Drawing a deep breath.*] Oh—how divinely light one feels on waking!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Good-night, Frau Maia—and good luck to——

ULFHEIM.

[*Calls out, interposing.*] Hush, hush!—for the devil's sake let's have none of your wizard wishes. Don't you see that we are going out to shoot——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

What will you bring me home from the hunting, Maia?

MAIA.

You shall have a bird of prey to model. I shall wing one for you.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Laughs mockingly and bitterly.*] Yes, to wing things —without knowing what you are doing—that has long been quite in your way.

MAIA.

[*Tossing her head.*] Oh, just let me take care of myself for the future, and I wish you then—! [*Nods and laughs roguishly.*] Good-bye—and a good, peaceful summer night on the upland!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Jestingly.*] Thanks! and all the ill-luck in the world over you and your hunting!

ULFHEIM.

[*Roaring with laughter.*] There now, t h a t is a wish worth having!

MAIA.

[*Laughing.*] Thanks, thanks, thanks, Professor!

[*They have both crossed the visible portion of the upland, and go out through the bushes to the right.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*After a short pause.*] A summer night on the upland! Yes, t h a t would have been life!

IRENE.

[*Suddenly, with a wild expression in her eyes.*] W i l l you spend a summer night on the upland—with me?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Stretching his arms wide.*] Yes, yes,—come!

IRENE.

My adored lord and master!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Oh, Irene!

IRENE.

[*Hoarsely, smiling and groping in her breast.*] It will be only an episode— [*Quickly, whispering.*] Hush!—do not look round, Arnold!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Also in a low voice.*] What is it?

IRENE.

A face that is staring at me.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Turns involuntarily.*] Where? [*With a start.*] Ah——!

[*The* SISTER OF MERCY'S *head is partly visible among the bushes beside the descent to the left. Her eyes are immovably fixed on* IRENE.

IRENE.

[*Rises and says softly.*] We must part then. No, you must remain sitting. Do you hear? You must not go with me. [*Bends over him and whispers.*] Till we meet again—to-night—on the upland.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

And you will come, Irene?

IRENE.

Yes, surely I will come. Wait for me here.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Repeats dreamily.*] Summer night on the upland. With you. With you. [*His eyes meet hers.*] Oh, Irene —that might have been our life.—And t h a t we have forfeited—we two.

IRENE.

We see the irretrievable only when— [*Breaks off.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Looks inquiringly at her.*] When——?

IRENE.

When we dead awaken.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Shakes his head mournfully.*] What do we really see then?

IRENE.

We see that we have never lived.

[*She goes towards the slope and descends.*

[*The* SISTER OF MERCY *makes way for her and follows her.* PROFESSOR RUBEK *remains sitting motionless beside the brook.*

MAIA.

[*Is heard singing triumphantly among the hills.*]

I am free! I am free! I am free!
No more life in the prison for me!
I am free as a bird! I am free!

ACT THIRD

A wild riven mountain-side, with sheer precipices at the back. Snow-clad peaks rise to the right, and lose themselves in drifting mists. To the left, on a stone-scree, stands an old, half-ruined hut. It is early morning. Dawn is breaking. The sun has not yet risen.

MAIA *comes, flushed and irritated, down over the stone-scree on the left.* ULFHEIM *follows, half angry, half laughing, holding her fast by the sleeve.*

MAIA.

[*Trying to tear herself loose.*] Let me go! Let me go, I say!

ULFHEIM.

Come, come! are you going to bite now? You're as snappish as a wolf.

MAIA.

[*Striking him over the hand.*] Let me go, I tell you! And be quiet!

ULFHEIM.

No, confound me if I will!

MAIA.

Then I will not go another step with you. Do you hear?—not a single step!

ULFHEIM.

Ho, ho! How can you get away from me, here, on the wild mountain-side?

MAIA.

I will jump over the precipice yonder, if need be——

ULFHEIM.

And mangle and mash yourself up into dogs'-meat! A juicy morsel. [*Lets go his hold.*] As you please. Jump over the precipice if you want to. It's a dizzy drop. There's only one narrow footpath down it, and that's almost impassable.

MAIA.

[*Dusts her skirt with her hand, and looks at him with angry eyes.*] Well, you are a nice one to go hunting with!

ULFHEIM.

Say rather, sporting.

MAIA.

Oh! So you call this sport, do you?

ULFHEIM.

Yes, I venture to take that liberty. It is the sort of sport I like best of all.

MAIA.

[*Tossing her head.*] Well—I must say! [*After a pause; looks searchingly at him.*] Why did you let the dogs loose up there?

ULFHEIM.

[*Blinking his eyes and smiling.*] So that they too might do a little hunting on their own account, don't you see?

MAIA.

There's not a word of truth in that! It wasn't for the dogs' sake that you let them go.

ULFHEIM.

[*Still smiling.*] Well, why did I let them go then? Let us hear.

MAIA.

You let them go because you wanted to get rid of Lars. He was to run after them and bring them in again, you said. And in the meantime— Oh, it was a pretty way to behave!

ULFHEIM.

In the meantime?

MAIA.

[*Curtly breaking off.*] No matter!

ULFHEIM.

[*In a confidential tone.*] Lars won't find them. You may safely swear to that. He won't come with them before the time's up.

MAIA.

[*Looking angrily at him.*] No, I daresay not.

ULFHEIM.

[*Catching at her arm.*] For Lars—he knows my—my methods of sport, you see.

MAIA.

[*Eludes him, and measures him with a glance.*] Do you know what you look like, Mr. Ulfheim?

ULFHEIM.

I should think I'm probably most like myself.

MAIA.

Yes, there you're exactly right. For you're the living image of a faun.

ULFHEIM.

A faun?

MAIA.

Yes, precisely; a faun.

ULFHEIM.

A faun! Isn't that a sort of monster? Or a kind of a wood demon, as you might call it?

MAIA.

Yes, just the sort of creature you are. A thing with a goat's beard and goat-legs. Yes, and the faun has horns too!

ULFHEIM.

So, so!—has he horns too?

MAIA.

A pair of ugly horns, just like yours, yes.

ULFHEIM.

Can you see the poor little horns *I* have?

MAIA.

Yes, I seem to see them quite plainly.

ULFHEIM.

[*Taking the dogs' leash out of his pocket.*] Then I had better see about tying you.

MAIA.

Have you gone quite mad? Would you tie me?

ULFHEIM.

If I a m a demon, let me b e a demon! So that's the way of it! You can see the horns, can you?

MAIA.

[*Soothingly.*] There, there, there! Now try to behave nicely, Mr. Ulfheim. [*Breaking off.*] But what has become of that hunting-castle of yours, that you boasted so much of? You said it lay somewhere hereabouts.

ULFHEIM.

[*Points with a flourish to the hut.*] There you have it, before your very eyes.

MAIA.

[*Looks at him.*] That old pig-stye!

ULFHEIM.

[*Laughing in his beard.*] It has harboured more than one king's daughter, I can tell you.

MAIA.

Was it t h e r e that that horrid man you told me about came to the king's daughter in the form of a bear?

ULFHEIM.

Yes, my fair companion of the chase—this is the scene. [*With a gesture of invitation.*] If you would deign to enter——

MAIA.

Isch! If ever I set foot in it—! Isch!

ULFHEIM.

Oh, two people can doze away a summer night in there comfortably enough. Or a whole summer, if it comes to that!

MAIA.

Thanks! One would need to have a pretty strong taste for that kind of thing. [*Impatiently.*] But now I am tired both of you and the hunting expedition. Now I am going down to the hotel—before people awaken down there.

ULFHEIM.

How do you propose to get down from here?

MAIA.

That's your affair. There must be a way down somewhere or other, I suppose.

ULFHEIM.

[*Pointing towards the back.*] Oh, certainly! There is a sort of way—right down the face of the precipice yonder——

MAIA.

There, you see. With a little goodwill——

ULFHEIM.

—But just you try if you dare go that way.

MAIA.

[*Doubtfully.*] Do you think I can't?

ULFHEIM.

Never in this world—if you don't let me help you.

MAIA.

[*Uneasily.*] Why, then come and help me! What else are you here for?

ULFHEIM.

Would you rather I should take you on my back——?

MAIA.

Nonsense!

ULFHEIM.

—Or carry you in my arms?

MAIA.

Now do stop talking that rubbish!

ULFHEIM.

[*With suppressed exasperation.*] I once took a young girl—lifted her up from the mire of the streets and carried her in my arms. Next my heart I carried her. So I would have borne her all through life—lest haply she should dash her foot against a stone. For her shoes were worn very thin when I found her——

MAIA.

And yet you took her up and carried her next your heart?

ULFHEIM.

Took her up out of the gutter and carried her as high and as carefully as I could. [*With a growling laugh.*] And do you know what I got for my reward?

MAIA.

No. What did you get?

ULFHEIM.

[*Looks at her, smiles and nods.*] I got the horns! The horns that y o u can see so plainly. Is not that a comical story, madam bear-murderess?

MAIA.

Oh yes, comical enough! But I know another story that is still more comical.

ULFHEIM.

How does t h a t story go?

MAIA.

This is how it goes. There was once a stupid girl, who had both a father and a mother—but a rather poverty-stricken home. Then there came a high and mighty seigneur into the midst of all this poverty. And he took the girl in his arms—as you did—and travelled far, far away with her——

ULFHEIM.

Was she so anxious to be with him?

MAIA.

Yes, for she was stupid, you see.

ULFHEIM.

And he, no doubt, was a brilliant and beautiful personage?

MAIA.

Oh no, he wasn't so superlatively beautiful either. But he pretended that he would take her with him to the top of the highest of mountains, where there were light and sunshine without end.

ULFHEIM.

So he was a mountaineer, was he, that man?

MAIA.

Yes, he was—in his way.

ULFHEIM.

And then he took the girl up with him——?

MAIA.

[*With a toss of the head.*] Took her up with him finely, you may be sure! Oh no! he beguiled her into a cold, clammy cage, where—as it seemed to h e r—there was neither sunlight nor fresh air, but only gilding and great petrified ghosts of people all round the walls.

ULFHEIM.

Devil take me, but it served her right!

MAIA.

Yes, but don't you think it's quite a comical story, all the same?

ULFHEIM.

[*Looks at her a moment.*] Now listen to me, my good companion of the chase——

MAIA.

Well, what is it now?

ULFHEIM.

Should not we two tack our poor shreds of life together?

MAIA.

Is his worship inclined to set up as a patching-tailor?

ULFHEIM.

Yes, indeed he is. Might not we two try to draw the rags together here and there—so as to make some sort of a human life out of them?

MAIA.

And when the poor tatters were quite worn out—what then?

ULFHEIM.

[*With a large gesture.*] Then there we shall stand, free and serene—as the man and woman we really are!

MAIA.

[*Laughing.*] You with your goat-legs, yes!

ULFHEIM.

And you with your— Well, let that pass.

MAIA.

Yes, come—let u s pass—on.

ULFHEIM.

Stop! Whither away, comrade?

MAIA.

Down to the hotel, of course.

ULFHEIM.

And afterwards?

MAIA.

Then we'll take a polite leave of each other, with thanks for pleasant company.

ULFHEIM.

C a n we part, we two? Do you think we c a n ?

MAIA.

Yes, you didn't manage to tie me up, you know.

ULFHEIM.

I have a castle to offer you——

MAIA.

[*Pointing to the hut.*] A fellow to that one

ULFHEIM.

It has not fallen to ruin yet.

MAIA.

And all the glory of the world, perhaps?

ULFHEIM.

A castle, I tell you——

MAIA.

Thanks! I have had enough of castles.

ULFHEIM.

—With splendid hunting-grounds stretching for miles around it.

MAIA.

Are there works of art too in this castle?

ULFHEIM.

[*Slowly.*] Well, no—it's true there are no works of art; but——

MAIA.

[*Relieved.*] Ah! that's one good thing, at any rate!

ULFHEIM.

Will you go with me, then—as far and as long as I want you?

MAIA.

There is a tame bird of prey keeping watch upon me.

ULFHEIM.

[*Wildly.*] We'll put a bullet in his wing, Maia!

MAIA.

[*Looks at him a moment, and says resolutely.*] Come then, and carry me down into the depths.

ULFHEIM.

[*Puts his arm round her waist.*] It is high time! The mist is upon us!

MAIA.

Is the way down terribly dangerous?

ULFHEIM.

The mountain mist is more dangerous still.

[*She shakes him off, goes to the edge of the precipice and looks over, but starts quickly back.*

ULFHEIM.

[*Goes towards her, laughing.*] What? Does it make you a little giddy?

MAIA.

[*Faintly.*] Yes, that too. But go and look over. Those two, coming up——

ULFHEIM.

[*Goes and bends over the edge of the precipice.*] It's only your bird of prey—and his strange lady.

MAIA.

Can't we get past them—without their seeing us?

ULFHEIM.

Impossible! The path is far too narrow. And there's no other way down.

MAIA.

[*Nerving herself.*] Well, well—let us face them here, then!

ULFHEIM.

Spoken like a true bear-killer, comrade!

[PROFESSOR RUBEK *and* IRENE *appear over the edge of the precipice at the back. He has his plaid over his shoulders; she has a fur cloak thrown loosely over her white dress, and a swansdown hood over her head.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Still only half visible above the edge.*] What, Maia! So we two meet once again?

MAIA.

[*With assumed coolness.*] At your service. Won't you come up?

[PROFESSOR RUBEK *climbs right up and holds out his hand to* IRENE, *who also comes right to the top.*

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Coldly to* MAIA.] So you, too, have been all night on the mountain,—as we have?

MAIA.

I have been hunting—yes. You gave me permission, you know.

ULFHEIM.

[*Pointing downward.*] Have you come up that path there?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

As you saw.

ULFHEIM.

And the strange lady too?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Yes, of course. [*With a glance at* MAIA.] Henceforth the strange lady and I do not intend our ways to part.

ULFHEIM.

Don't you know, then, that it is a deadly dangerous way you have come?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

We thought we would try it, nevertheless. For it did not seem particularly hard at first.

ULFHEIM.

No, at first nothing seems hard. But presently you may come to a tight place where you can neither get forward nor back. And then you stick fast, Professor! Mountain-fast, as we hunters call it.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Smiles and looks at him.*] Am I to take these as oracular utterances, Mr. Ulfheim?

ULFHEIM.

Lord preserve me from playing the oracle! [*Urgently, pointing up towards the heights.*] But don't you see that the storm is upon us? Don't you hear the blasts of wind?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Listening.*] They sound like the prelude to the Resurrection Day.

ULFHEIM.

They are storm-blasts from the peaks, man! Just look how the clouds are rolling and sinking—soon they'll be all around us like a winding-sheet!

IRENE.

[*With a start and shiver.*] I know that sheet!

MAIA.

[*Drawing* ULFHEIM *away.*] Let us make haste and get down.

ULFHEIM.

[*To* PROFESSOR RUBEK.] I cannot help more than one. Take refuge in the hut in the meantime—while the storm lasts. Then I shall send people up to fetch the two of you away.

IRENE.

[*In terror.*] To fetch us away! No, no!

ULFHEIM.

[*Harshly.*] To take you by force if necessary—for it's a matter of life and death here. Now, you know it. [*To* MAIA.] Come, then—and don't fear to trust yourself in your comrade's hands.

MAIA.

[*Clinging to him.*] Oh, how I shall rejoice and sing, if I get down with a whole skin!

ULFHEIM.

[*Begins the descent and calls to the others.*] You'll wait, then, in the hut, till the men come with ropes, and fetch you away.

[ULFHEIM, *with* MAIA *in his arms, clambers rapidly but warily down the precipice.*

IRENE.

[*Looks for some time at* PROFESSOR RUBEK *with terror-stricken eyes.*] Did you hear that, Arnold?—men are coming up to fetch me away! Many men will come up here——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Do not be alarmed, Irene!

IRENE.

[*In growing terror.*] And she, the woman in black—she will come too. For she must have missed me long ago. And then she will seize me, Arnold! And put me in the strait-waistcoat. Oh, she has it with her, in her box. I have seen it with my own eyes——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Not a soul shall be suffered to touch you.

IRENE.

[*With a wild smile.*] Oh no—I myself have a resource against that,

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

What resource do you mean?

IRENE.

[*Drawing out the knife.*] This!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Tries to seize it.*] Have you a knife?

IRENE.

Always, always—both day and night—in bed as well!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Give me that knife, Irene!

IRENE.

[*Concealing it.*] You shall not have it. I may very likely find a use for it myself.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

What use can you have for it, here?

IRENE.

[*Looks fixedly at him.*] It was intended for y o u, Arnold.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

For m e!

IRENE.

As we were sitting by the Lake of Taunitz last evening——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

By the Lake of——

IRENE.

—Outside the peasant's hut—and playing with swans and water-lilies——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

What then—what then?

IRENE.

—And when I heard you say with such deathly, icy coldness—that I was nothing but an episode in your life——

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

It was y o u that said t h a t, Irene, not I.

IRENE.

[*Continuing.*] —Then I had my knife out. I wanted to stab you in the back with it.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Darkly.*] And why did you hold your hand?

IRENE.

Because it flashed upon me with a sudden horror that you were dead already—long ago.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Dead?

IRENE.

Dead. Dead, you as well as I. We sat there by the Lake of Taunitz, we two clay-cold bodies—and played with each other.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

I do not call that being dead. But you do not understand me.

IRENE.

Then where is the burning desire for me that you fought and battled against when I stood freely forth before you as the woman arisen from the dead?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Our love is assuredly not dead, Irene.

IRENE.

The love that belongs to the life of earth—the beautiful, miraculous earth-life—the inscrutable earth-life—that is dead in both of us.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Passionately.*] And do you know that just that love—it is burning and seething in me as hotly as ever before?

IRENE.

And I? Have you forgotten who I now am?

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Be who or what you please, for aught I care! For me, you are the woman I see in my dreams of you.

IRENE.

I have stood on the turn-table—naked—and made a show of myself to many hundreds of men—after you.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

It was I that drove you to the turn-table—blind as I then was—I, who placed the dead clay-image above the happiness of life—of love.

IRENE.

[*Looking down.*] Too late—too late!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Not by a hairsbreadth has all that has passed in the interval lowered you in my eyes.

IRENE.

[*With head erect.*] Nor in my own!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Well, what then! Then we are free—and there is still time for us to live our life, Irene.

IRENE.

[*Looks sadly at him.*] The desire for life is dead in me, Arnold. Now I have arisen. And I look for you.

And I find you.—And then I see that you and life lie dead—as I have lain.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

Oh, how utterly you are astray! Both in us and around us life is fermenting and throbbing as fiercely as ever!

IRENE.

[*Smiling and shaking her head.*] The young woman of your Resurrection Day can see all life lying on its bier.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Throwing his arms violently around her.*] Then let two of the dead—us two—for once live life to its uttermost—before we go down to our graves again!

IRENE.

[*With a shriek.*] Arnold!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

But not here in the half darkness! Not here with this hideous dank shroud flapping around us——

IRENE.

[*Carried away by passion.*] No, no—up in the light, and in all the glittering glory! Up to the Peak of Promise!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

There we will hold our marriage-feast, Irene—oh, my beloved!

IRENE.

[*Proudly.*] The sun may freely look on us, Arnold.

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

All the powers of light may freely look on us—and all the powers of darkness too. [*Seizes her hand.*] Will you then follow me, oh my grace-given bride?

IRENE.

[*As though transfigured.*] I follow you, freely and gladly, my lord and master!

PROFESSOR RUBEK.

[*Drawing her along with him.*] We must first pass through the mists, Irene, and then——

IRENE.

Yes, through all the mists, and then right up to the summit of the tower that shines in the sunrise.

[*The mist-clouds close in over the scene*—PROFESSOR RUBEK *and* IRENE, *hand in hand, climb up over the snow-field to the right and soon disappear among the lower clouds. Keen storm-gusts hurtle and whistle through the air.*

[*The* SISTER OF MERCY *appears upon the stone-scree to the left. She stops and looks around silently and searchingly.*

[MAIA *can be heard singing triumphantly far in the depths below.*

MAIA.

I am free! I am free! I am free!
No more life in the prison for me!
I am free as a bird! I am free!

[*Suddenly a sound like thunder is heard from high up on the snow-field, which glides and whirls downwards with headlong speed.* PROFESSOR RUBEK *and* IRENE *can be dimly discerned as they are whirled along with the masses of snow and buried in them.*

THE SISTER OF MERCY.

[*Gives a shriek, stretches out her arms towards them and cries.*] Irene!

[*Stands silent a moment, then makes the sign of the cross before her in the air, and says.*

Pax vobiscum!

[MAIA'S *triumphant song sounds from still farther down below.*

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

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AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION*

FROM *Pillars of Society* to *John Gabriel Borkman*, all Ibsen's plays, with one exception, succeeded each other at intervals of two years. The single exception was *An Enemy of the People*. The storm of obloquy which greeted *Ghosts* stirred him to unwonted rapidity of production. *Ghosts* had appeared in December, 1881; already, in the spring of 1882, Ibsen, then living in Rome, was at work upon its successor; and he finished it at Gossensass, in the Tyrol, in the early autumn. It appeared in Copenhagen at the end of November. Perhaps the rapidity of its composition may account for the fact that we find no sketch or draft of it in the poet's *Literary Remains*.

John Paulsen[1] relates an anecdote of Ibsen's extreme secretiveness during the process of composition, which may find a place here: "One summer he was travelling by rail with his wife and son. He was engaged upon a new play at the time; but neither Fru Ibsen nor Sigurd had any idea as to what it was about. Of course they were both very curious. It happened that, at a station, Ibsen left the carriage for a few moments. As he did so he dropped a scrap of paper. His wife picked it up, and read on it only the words, 'The doctor says. . . .' Noth-

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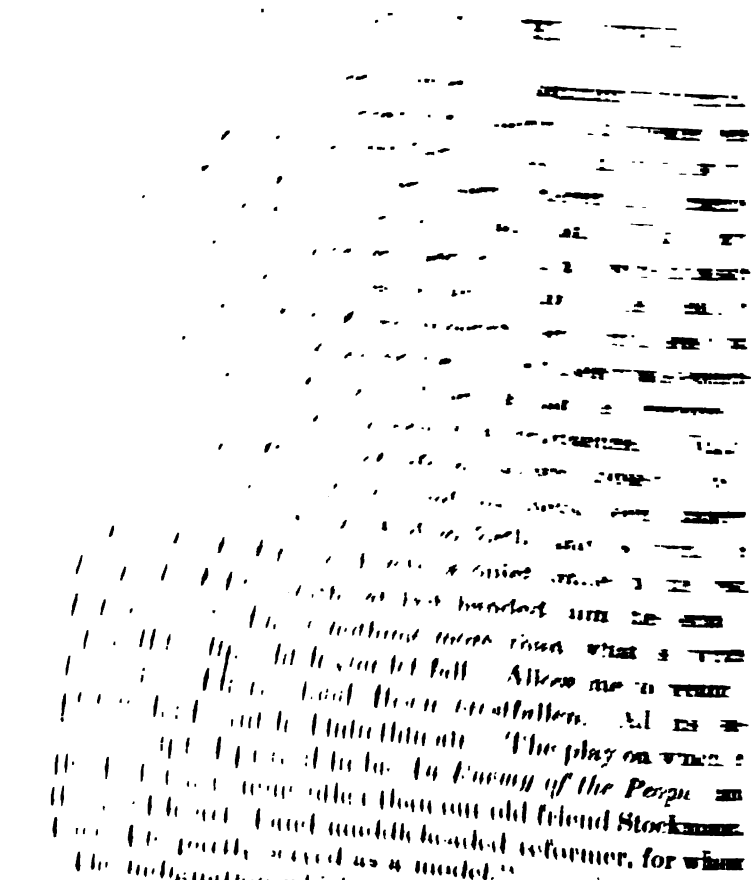
[1] *Samliv med Ibsen*, p. 173.



indignation which glows in *An Enemy of the Peo-*
ple was kindled, in the main, by the attitude adopted
towards *Ghosts* by the Norwegian Liberal press and the
"compact majority" it represented. But the image on
which the play rings the changes was present to the poet's
mind before *Ghosts* was written. On December 19, 1879
—a fortnight after the publication of *A Doll's House*—

Ibsen wrote to Professor Dietrichson: "It appears to me doubtful whether better artistic conditions can be attained in Norway before the intellectual soil has been thoroughly turned up and cleansed, and all the swamps drained off." Here we have clearly the germ of *An Enemy of the People*. The image so took hold of Ibsen that after applying it to social life in this play, he recurred to it in *The Wild Duck*, in relation to the individual life.

The mood to which we definitely owe *An Enemy of the People* appears very clearly in a letter to George Brandes, dated January 3, 1882, in which Ibsen thanks him for his criticism of *Ghosts*. "What are we to say," he proceeds, "of the attitude taken up by the so-called Liberal press—by those leaders who speak and write about freedom of action and thought, and at the same time make themselves the slaves of the supposed opinions of their subscribers? I am more and more confirmed in my belief that there is something demoralising in engaging in politics and joining parties. I, at any rate, shall never be able to join a party which has the majority on its side. Björnson says, 'The majority is always right'; and as a practical politician he is bound, I suppose, to say so. I, on the contrary, of necessity say, 'The minority is always right.' Naturally I am not thinking of that minority of stagnationists who are left behind by the great middle party, which with us is called Liberal; I mean that minority which leads the van, and pushes on to points which the majority has not yet reached. I hold that that man is in the right who is most closely in league with the future."

The same letter closes with a passage which fore-

shadows not only *An Enemy of the People*, but *Rosmersholm*: "When I think how slow and heavy and dull the general intelligence is at home, when I notice the low standard by which everything is judged, a deep despondency comes over me, and it often seems to me that I might just as well end my literary activity at once. They really do not need poetry at home; they get along so well with the *Parliamentary News* and the *Lutheran Weekly*. And then they have their party papers. I have not the gifts that go to make a good citizen, nor yet the gift of orthodoxy; and what I possess no gift for I keep out of. Liberty is the first and highest condition for me. At home they do not trouble much about liberty, but only about liberties, a few more or a few less, according to the standpoint of their party. I feel, too, most painfully affected by the crudity, the plebeian element, in all our public discussion. The very praiseworthy attempt to make of our people a democratic community has inadvertently gone a good way towards making us a plebeian community. Distinction of soul seems to be on the decline at home."

So early as March 16, 1882, Ibsen announces to his publisher that he is "fully occupied with preparations for a new play." "This time," he says, "it will be a peaceable production which can be read by Ministers of State and wholesale merchants and their ladies, and from which the theatres will not be obliged to recoil. Its execution will come very easy to me, and I shall do my best to have it ready pretty early in the autumn." In this he was successful. From Gossensass on September 9, he wrote to Hegel: "I have the pleasure of sending you here-

with the remainder of the manuscript of my new play. I have enjoyed writing this piece, and I feel quite lost and lonely now that it is out of hand. Dr. Stockmann and I got on excellently together; we agree on so many subjects. But the Doctor is a more muddleheaded person than I am, and he has, moreover, several other characteristics because of which people will stand hearing a good many things from him which they might perhaps not have taken in such very good part had they been said by me."

A letter to Brandes, written six months after the appearance of the play (June 12, 1883), answers some objection which the critic seems to have made—of what nature we can only guess: "As to *An Enemy of the People*, if we had a chance to discuss it I think we should come to a tolerable agreement. You are, of course, right in urging that we *must* all work for the spread of our opinions. But I maintain that a fighter at the intellectual outposts can never gather a majority around him. In ten years, perhaps, the majority may occupy the standpoint which Dr. Stockmann held at the public meeting. But during these ten years the Doctor will not have been standing still; he will still be at least ten years ahead of the majority. The majority, the mass, the multitude, can never overtake him; he can never have the majority with him. As for myself, at all events, I am conscious of this incessant progression. At the point where I stood when I wrote each of my books, there now stands a fairly compact multitude; but I myself am there no longer; I am elsewhere, and, I hope, further ahead." This is a fine saying, and as just as it is fine, with respect to the series of social plays, down to, and including, *Rosmersholm*.

To the psychological series, which begins with *The Lady from the Sea*, this law of progression scarcely applies. The standpoint in each is different; but the movement is not so much one of intellectual advance as of deepening spiritual insight.

As Ibsen predicted, the Scandinavian theatres seized with avidity upon *An Enemy of the People*. Between January and March, 1883, it was produced in Christiania, Bergen, Stockholm, and Copenhagen. It has always been very popular on the stage, and was the play chosen to represent Ibsen in the series of festival performances which inaugurated the National Theatre at Christiania. The first evening, September 1, 1899, was devoted to Holberg, the great founder of Norwegian-Danish drama; *An Enemy of the People* followed on September 2; and on September 3 Björnson held the stage, with *Sigurd Jorsalfar*. Oddly enough, *Ein Volksfeind* was four years old before it found its way to the German stage. It was first produced in Berlin, March 5, 1887, and has since then been very popular throughout Germany. It has even been presented at the Court Theatres of Berlin and Vienna—a fact which seems remarkable when we note that in France and Spain it has been pressed into the service of anarchism as a revolutionary manifesto. When first produced in Paris in 1895, and again in 1899, it was made the occasion of anarchist demonstrations. It was the play chosen for representation in Paris on Ibsen's seventieth birthday, March 29, 1898. In England it was first produced by Mr. Beerbohm Tree at the Haymarket Theatre on the afternoon of June 14, 1893. Mr. (now Sir Herbert) Tree has repeated his performance of Stock-

mann a good many times in London, the provinces, and America. He revived the play at His Majesty's Theatre in 1905. Mr. Louis Calvert played Stockmann at the Gentleman's Concert Hall in Manchester, January 27, 1894. I can find no record of the play in America, save German performances and those given by Mr. Tree; but it seems incredible that no American actor should have been attracted by the part of Stockmann. *Een Vijand des Volks* was produced in Holland in 1884, before it had even been seen in Germany; and in Italy *Un Nemico del Popolo* holds a place in the repertory of the distinguished actor Ermete Novelli.

Of all Ibsen's plays, *An Enemy of the People* is the least poetical, the least imaginative, the one which makes least appeal to our sensibilities. Even in *The League of Youth* there is a touch of poetic fancy in the character of Selma; while *Pillars of Society* is sentimentally conceived throughout, and possesses in Martha a figure of great, though somewhat conventional, pathos. In this play, on the other hand, there is no appeal either to the imagination or to the tender emotions. It is a straightforward satiric comedy, dealing exclusively with the everyday prose of life. We have only to compare it with its immediate predecessor, *Ghosts*, and its immediate successor, *The Wild Duck*, to feel how absolutely different is the imaginative effort involved in it. Realising this, we no longer wonder that the poet should have thrown it off in half the time he usually required to mature and execute one of his creations.

Yet *An Enemy of the People* takes a high place in the second rank of the Ibsen works, in virtue of its buoyant

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

(1882)

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

(1882)

CHARACTERS

DOCTOR THOMAS STOCKMANN, *medical officer of the Baths.*
MRS. STOCKMANN, *his wife.*
PETRA, *their daughter, a teacher.*
EILIF, MORTEN } *their sons, thirteen and ten years old respectively.*
PETER STOCKMANN, *the doctor's elder brother, Burgomaster*[1] *and chief of police, chairman of the Baths Committee, etc.*
MORTEN KIIL,[2] *master tanner, Mrs. Stockmann's adoptive-father.*
HOVSTAD, *editor of the "People's Messenger."*
BILLING, *on the staff of the paper.*
HORSTER, *a ship's captain.*
ASLAKSEN, *a printer.*

Participants in a meeting of citizens: all sorts and conditions of men, some women, and a band of schoolboys.

The action passes in a town on the South Coast of Norway.

[1] "Burgomaster" is the most convenient substitute for "Byfogd," but "Town Clerk" would perhaps be more nearly equivalent. It is impossible to find exact counterparts in English for the different grades of the Norwegian bureaucracy.

[2] Pronounce: *Keel.*

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

ACT FIRST

Evening. DR. STOCKMANN'S *sitting-room; simply but neatly decorated and furnished. In the wall to the right are two doors, the further one leading to the hall, the nearer one to the Doctor's study. In the opposite wall, facing the hall door, a door leading to the other rooms of the house. Against the middle of this wall stands the stove; further forward a sofa with a mirror above it, and in front of it an oval table with a cover. On the table a lighted lamp, with a shade. In the back wall an open door leading to the dining-room, in which is seen a supper-table, with a lamp on it.*

BILLING *is seated at the supper-table, with a napkin under his chin.* MRS. STOCKMANN *is standing by the table and placing before him a dish with a large joint of roast beef. The other seats round the table are empty; the table is in disorder, as after a meal.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

If you come an hour late, Mr. Billing, you must put up with a cold supper.

BILLING.

[*Eating.*] It is excellent—really first rate.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

You know how Stockmann insists on regular meal-hours——

BILLING.

Oh, I don't mind at all. I almost think I enjoy my supper more when I can sit down to it like this, alone and undisturbed.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Oh, well, if you enjoy it—— [*Listening in the direction of the hall.*] I believe this is Mr. Hovstad coming too.

BILLING.

Very likely.

BURGOMASTER STOCKMANN *enters, wearing an overcoat and an official gold-laced cap, and carrying a stick.*

BURGOMASTER.

Good evening, sister-in-law.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Coming forward into the sitting-room.*] Oh, good evening; is it you? It is good of you to look in.

BURGOMASTER.

I was just passing, and so—— [*Looks towards the drawing-room.*] Ah, I see you have company.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Rather embarrassed.*] Oh no, not at all; it's the merest chance. [*Hurriedly.*] Won't you sit down and have a little supper?

BURGOMASTER.

I? No, thank you. Good gracious! hot meat in the evening! That wouldn't suit my digestion.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Oh, for once in a way——

BURGOMASTER.

No, no,—much obliged to you. I stick to tea and bread and butter. It's more wholesome in the long run —and rather more economical, too.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Smiling.*] You mustn't think Thomas and I are mere spendthrifts, either.

BURGOMASTER.

You are not, sister-in-law; far be it from me to say that. [*Pointing to the Doctor's study.*] Is he not at home?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

No, he has gone for a little turn after supper—with the boys.

BURGOMASTER.

I wonder if that is a good thing to do? [*Listening.*] There he is, no doubt.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

No, that is not he. [*A knock.*] Come in!

HOVSTAD *enters from the hall.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Ah, it's Mr. Hovstad——

HOVSTAD.

You must excuse me; I was detained at the printer's. Good evening, Burgomaster.

BURGOMASTER.

[*Bowing rather stiffly.*] Mr. Hovstad? You come on business, I presume?

HOVSTAD.

Partly. About an article for the paper.

BURGOMASTER.

So I supposed. I hear my brother is an extremely prolific contributor to the *People's Messenger*.

HOVSTAD.

Yes, when he wants to unburden his mind on one thing or another, he gives the *Messenger* the benefit.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*To* HOVSTAD.] But will you not——? [*Points to the dining-room.*]

BURGOMASTER.

Well, well, I am far from blaming him for writing for the class of readers he finds most in sympathy with him. And, personally, I have no reason to bear your paper any ill-will, Mr. Hovstad.

HOVSTAD.

No, I should think not.

BURGOMASTER.

One may say, on the whole, that a fine spirit of mutual tolerance prevails in our town—an excellent public spirit. And that is because we have a great common interest to hold us together—an interest in which all right-minded citizens are equally concerned——

HOVSTAD.

Yes—the Baths.

BURGOMASTER.

Just so. We have our magnificent new Baths. Mark my words! The whole life of the town will centre around the Baths, Mr. Hovstad. There can be no doubt of it!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

That is just what Thomas says.

BURGOMASTER.

How marvellously the place has developed, even in this couple of years! Money has come into circulation, and brought life and movement with it. Houses and ground-rents rise in value every day.

HOVSTAD.

And there are fewer people out of work.

BURGOMASTER.

That is true. There is a gratifying diminution in the burden imposed on the well-to-do classes by the poor-

rates; and they will be still further lightened if only we have a really good summer this year—a rush of visitors—plenty of invalids, to give the Baths a reputation.

HOVSTAD.

I hear there is every prospect of that.

BURGOMASTER.

Things look most promising. Inquiries about apartments and so forth keep on pouring in.

HOVSTAD.

Then the Doctor's paper will come in very opportunely.

BURGOMASTER.

Has he been writing again?

HOVSTAD.

This is a thing he wrote in the winter; enlarging on the virtues of the Baths, and on the excellent sanitary conditions of the town. But at that time I held it over.

BURGOMASTER.

Ah—I suppose there was something not quite judicious about it?

HOVSTAD.

Not at all. But I thought it better to keep it till the spring, when people are beginning to look about them, and think of their summer quarters——

BURGOMASTER.

You were right, quite right, Mr. Hovstad.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Yes, Thomas is really indefatigable where the Baths are concerned.

BURGOMASTER.

It is his duty as one of the staff.

HOVSTAD.

And of course he was really their creator.

BURGOMASTER.

Was he? Indeed! I gather that certain persons are of that opinion. But I should have thought that I, too, had a modest share in that undertaking.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Yes, that is what Thomas is always saying.

HOVSTAD.

No one dreams of denying it, Burgomaster. You set the thing going, and put it on a practical basis; everybody knows that. I only meant that the original idea was the Doctor's.

BURGOMASTER.

Yes, my brother has certainly had ideas enough in his time—worse luck! But when it comes to realising them, Mr. Hovstad, we want men of another stamp. I should have thought that in this house at any rate——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Why, my dear brother-in-law——

HOVSTAD.

Burgomaster, how can you——?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Do go in and have some supper, Mr. Hovstad; my husband is sure to be home directly.

HOVSTAD.

Thanks; just a mouthful, perhaps.

[*He goes into the dining-room.*

BURGOMASTER.

[*Speaking in a low voice.*] It is extraordinary how people who spring direct from the peasant class never can get over their want of tact.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

But why should you care? Surely you and Thomas can share the honour, like brothers.

BURGOMASTER.

Yes, one would suppose so; but it seems a share of the honour is not enough for some persons.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

What nonsense! You and Thomas always get on so well together. [*Listening.*] There, I think I hear him.

[*Goes and opens the door to the hall.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Laughing and talking loudly, without.*] Here's another visitor for you, Katrina. Isn't it capital, eh? Come in, Captain Horster. Hang your coat on that peg. What! you don't wear an overcoat? Fancy, Katrina, I caught him in the street, and I could hardly get him to come in.

CAPTAIN HORSTER *enters and bows to* MRS. STOCKMANN.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*In the doorway.*] In with you, boys. They're famishing again! Come along, Captain Horster; you must try our roast beef——

[*He forces* HORSTER *into the dining-room.* EILIF *and* MORTEN *follow them.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

But, Thomas, don't you see——

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Turning round in the doorway.*] Oh, is that you, Peter! [*Goes up to him and holds out his hand.*] Now this is really capital.

BURGOMASTER.

Unfortunately, I have only a moment to spare——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Nonsense! We shall have some toddy in a minute. You're not forgetting the toddy, Katrina?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Of course not; the water's boiling.

[*She goes into the dining-room.*

BURGOMASTER.

Toddy too——!

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes; sit down, and let's make ourselves comfortable.

BURGOMASTER.

Thanks; I never join in drinking parties.

DR. STOCKMANN.

But this isn't a party.

BURGOMASTER.

I don't know what else—— [*Looks towards the dining-room.*] It's extraordinary how they can get through all that food.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Rubbing his hands.*] Yes, doesn't it do one good to see young people eat? Always hungry! That's as it should be. They need good, solid meat to put stamina into them! It is they that have got to whip up the ferment of the future, Peter.

BURGOMASTER.

May I ask what there is to be "whipped up," as you call it?

DR. STOCKMANN.

You'll have to ask the young people that—when the time comes. We shan't see it, of course. Two old fogies like you and me——

BURGOMASTER.

Come, come! Surely that is a very extraordinary expression to use——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh, you mustn't mind my nonsense, Peter. I'm in such glorious spirits, you see. I feel so unspeakably happy in the midst of all this growing, germinating life. Isn't it a marvellous time we live in! It seems as though a whole new world were springing up around us.

BURGOMASTER.

Do you really think so?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Of course, you can't see it as clearly as I do. You have passed your life in the midst of it all; and that deadens the impression. But I who had to vegetate all those years in that little hole in the north, hardly ever seeing a soul that could speak a stimulating word to me—all this affects me as if I had suddenly dropped into the heart of some teeming metropolis.

BURGOMASTER.

Well, metropolis——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh, I know well enough that things are on a small scale here, compared with many other places. But

there's life here—there's promise—there's an infinity of things to work and strive for; and that is the main point. [*Calling.*] Katrina, haven't there been any letters?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*In the dining-room.*] No, none at all.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And then a good income, Peter! That's a thing one learns to appreciate when one has lived on starvation wages——

BURGOMASTER.

Good heavens——!

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh yes, I can tell you we often had hard times of it up there. And now we can live like princes! To-day, for example, we had roast beef for dinner; and we've had some of it for supper too. Won't you have some? Come along—just look at it, at any rate——

BURGOMASTER.

No, no; certainly not——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well then, look here—do you see we've bought a table-cover?

BURGOMASTER.

Yes, so I observed.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And a lamp-shade, too. Do you see? Katrina has been saving up for them. They make the room look comfortable, don't they? Come over here. No, no, no, not there. So—yes! Now you see how it concentrates the light——. I really think it has quite an artistic effect. Eh?

BURGOMASTER.

Yes, when one can afford such luxuries——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh, I can afford it now. Katrina says I make almost as much as we spend.

BURGOMASTER.

Ah—almost!

DR. STOCKMANN.

Besides, a man of science must live in some style. Why, I believe a mere sheriff[1] spends much more a year than I do.

BURGOMASTER.

Yes, I should think so! A member of the superior magistracy——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well then, even a common shipowner! A man of that sort will get through many times as much——

BURGOMASTER.

That is natural, in your relative positions.

[1] *Amtmand*, the chief magistrate of an *Amt* or county; consequently a high dignitary in the official hierarchy.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And after all, Peter, I really don't squander any money. But I can't deny myself the delight of having people about me. I must have them. After living so long out of the world, I find it a necessity of life to have bright, cheerful, freedom-loving, hard-working young fellows around me—and that's what they are, all of them, that are sitting there eating so heartily. I wish you knew more of Hovstad——

BURGOMASTER.

Ah, that reminds me—Hovstad was telling me that he is going to publish another article of yours.

DR. STOCKMANN.

An article of mine?

BURGOMASTER.

Yes, about the Baths. An article you wrote last winter.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh, that one! But I don't want that to appear for the present.

BURGOMASTER.

Why not? It seems to me this is the very time for it.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Very likely—under ordinary circumstances——

[*Crosses the room.*

BURGOMASTER.

[*Following him with his eyes.*] And what is unusual in the circumstances now?

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Standing still.*] The fact is, Peter, I really cannot tell you just now; not this evening, at all events. There may prove to be a great deal that is unusual in the circumstances. On the other hand, there may be nothing at all. Very likely it's only my fancy.

BURGOMASTER.

Upon my word, you are very enigmatical. Is there anything in the wind? Anything I am to be kept in the dark about? I should think, as Chairman of the Bath Committee——

DR. STOCKMANN.

And I should think that I—— Well, well, don't let us get our backs up, Peter.

BURGOMASTER.

God forbid! I am not in the habit of "getting my back up," as you express it. But I must absolutely insist that all arrangements shall be made and carried out in a businesslike manner, and through the properly constituted authorities. I cannot be a party to crooked or underhand courses.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Have *I* ever been given to crooked or underhand courses?

BURGOMASTER.

At any rate you have an ingrained propensity to taking your own course. And that, in a well-ordered community, is almost as inadmissible. The individual must subordinate himself to society, or, more precisely, to the authorities whose business it is to watch over the welfare of society.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Maybe. But what the devil has that to do with me?

BURGOMASTER.

Why this is the very thing, my dear Thomas, that it seems you will never learn. But take care; you will have to pay for it—sooner or later. Now I have warned you. Good-bye.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Are you stark mad? You're on a totally wrong track——

BURGOMASTER.

I am not often on the wrong track. Moreover, I must protest against—— [*Bowing towards dining-room.*] Good-bye, sister-in-law; good-day to you, gentlemen.

[*He goes.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Entering the sitting-room.*] Has he gone?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, and in a fine temper, too.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Why, my dear Thomas, what have you been doing to him now?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Nothing at all. He can't possibly expect me to account to him for everything—before the time comes.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

What have you to account to him for?

DR. STOCKMANN.

H'm;—never mind about that, Katrina.—It's very odd the postman doesn't come.

[HOVSTAD, BILLING *and* HORSTER *have risen from table and come forward into the sitting-room.* EILIF *and* MORTEN *presently follow.*

BILLING.

[*Stretching himself.*] Ah! Strike me dead if one doesn't feel a new man after such a meal.

HOVSTAD.

The Burgomaster didn't seem in the best of tempers this evening.

DR. STOCKMANN.

That's his stomach. He has a very poor digestion.

HOVSTAD.

I fancy it's the staff of the *Messenger* he finds it hardest to stomach.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

I thought you got on well enough with him.

HOVSTAD.

Oh, yes; but it's only a sort of armistice between us.

BILLING.

That's it! That word sums up the situation.

DR. STOCKMANN.

We must remember that Peter is a lonely bachelor, poor devil! He has no home to be happy in; only business, business. And then all that cursëd weak tea he goes and pours down his throat! Now then, chairs round the table, boys! Katrina, shan't we have the toddy now?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Going towards the dining-room.*] I am just getting it.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And you, Captain Horster, sit beside me on the sofa. So rare a guest as you——. Sit down, gentlemen, sit down.

[*The men sit round the table;* MRS. STOCKMANN *brings in a tray with kettle, glasses, decanters, etc.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Here you have it: here's arrak, and this is rum, and this cognac. Now, help yourselves.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Taking a glass.*] So we will. [*While the toddy is being mixed.*] And now out with the cigars. Eilif, I think you know where the box is. And Morten, you may fetch my pipe. [*The boys go into the room on the right.*] I have a suspicion that Eilif sneaks a cigar now and then, but I pretend not to notice. [*Calls.*] And my smoking-cap, Morten! Katrina, can't you tell him where I left it. Ah, he's got it. [*The boys bring in the things.*] Now, friends, help yourselves. I stick to my pipe, you know;—this one has been on many a stormy journey with me, up there in the north. [*They clink glasses.*] Your health! Ah, I can tell you it's better fun to sit cosily here, safe from wind and weather.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Who sits knitting.*] Do you sail soon, Captain Horster?

HORSTER.

I hope to be ready for a start by next week.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

And you're going to America?

HORSTER.

Yes, that's the intention.

BILLING.

But then you'll miss the election of the new Town Council.

HORSTER.

Is there to be an election again?

BILLING.

Didn't you know?

HORSTER.

No, I don't trouble myself about those things.

BILLING.

But I suppose you take an interest in public affairs?

HORSTER.

No, I don't understand anything about them.

BILLING.

All the same, one ought at least to vote.

HORSTER.

Even those who don't understand anything about it?

BILLING.

Understand? Why, what do you mean by that? Society is like a ship: every man must put his hand to the helm.

HORSTER.

That may be all right on shore; but at sea it wouldn't do at all.

HOVSTAD.

It's remarkable how little sailors care about public affairs as a rule.

BILLING.

Most extraordinary.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Sailors are like birds of passage; they are at home both in the south and in the north. So it behoves the rest of us to be all the more energetic, Mr. Hovstad. Will there be anything of public interest in the *People's Messenger* to-morrow?

HOVSTAD.

Nothing of local interest. But the day after to-morrow I think of printing your article——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh confound it, that article! No, you'll have to hold it over.

HOVSTAD.

Really? We happen to have plenty of space, and I should say this was the very time for it——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, yes, you may be right; but you must hold it over all the same. I shall explain to you by-and-by.

PETRA, *wearing a hat and cloak, and with a number of exercise-books under her arm, enters from the hall.*

PETRA.

Good evening.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Good evening, Petra. Is that you?

[*General greetings.* PETRA *puts her cloak, hat, and books on a chair by the door.*

PETRA.

Here you all are, enjoying yourselves, while I've been out slaving.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well then, you come and enjoy yourself too.

BILLING.

May I mix you a little——?

PETRA.

[*Coming towards the table.*] Thank you, I'd rather help myself—you always make it too strong. By the way, father, I have a letter for you.

[*Goes to the chair where her things are lying.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

A letter! From whom?

PETRA.

[*Searching in the pocket of her cloak.*] I got it from the postman just as I was going out——

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Rising and going towards her.*] And you only bring it me now?

PETRA.

I really hadn't time to run up again. Here it is.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Seizing the letter.*] Let me see, let me see, child. [*Reads the address.*] Yes; this is it——!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Is it the one you have been so anxious about, Thomas?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes it is. I must go at once. Where shall I find a light, Katrina? Is there no lamp in my study again!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Yes—the lamp is lighted. It's on the writing-table.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Good, good. Excuse me one moment——

[*He goes into the room on the right.*

PETRA.

What can it be, mother?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

I don't know. For the last few days he has been continually on the look-out for the postman.

BILLING.

Probably a country patient——

PETRA.

Poor father! He'll soon have far too much to do. [*Mixes her toddy.*] Ah, this will taste good!

HOVSTAD.

Have you been teaching in the night school as well to-day?

PETRA.

[*Sipping from her glass.*] Two hours.

BILLING.

And four hours in the morning at the institute——

PETRA.

[*Sitting down by the table.*] Five hours.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

And I see you have exercises to correct this evening.

PETRA.

Yes, a heap of them.

HORSTER.

It seems to me you have plenty to do, too.

PETRA.

Yes; but I like it. You feel so delightfully tired after it.

BILLING.

Do you like that?

PETRA.

Yes, for then you sleep so well.

MORTEN.

I say, Petra, you must be a great sinner.

PETRA.

A sinner?

MORTEN.

Yes, if you work so hard. Mr. Rörlund[1] says work is a punishment for our sins.

EILIF.

[*Contemptuously.*] Bosh! What a silly you are, to believe such stuff as that.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Come come, Eilif.

BILLING.

[*Laughing.*] Capital, capital!

HOVSTAD.

Should you not like to work so hard, Morten?

MORTEN.

No, I shouldn't.

HOVSTAD.

Then what will you do with yourself in the world?

MORTEN.

I should like to be a Viking.

EILIF.

But then you'd have to be a heathen.

MORTEN.

Well, so I would.

[1] See *Pillars of Society.*

BILLING.

There I agree with you, Morten!. I say just the same thing.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Making a sign to him.*] No, no, Mr. Billing, I'm sure you don't.

BILLING.

Strike me dead but I do, though. I am a heathen, and I'm proud of it. You'll see we shall all be heathens soon.

MORTEN.

And shall we be able to do anything we like then?

BILLING.

Well, you see, Morten——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Now run away, boys; I'm sure you have lessons to prepare for to-morrow.

EILIF.

You might let me stay just a little longer——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

No, you must go too. Be off, both of you.

[*The boys say good-night and go into the room on the left.*

HOVSTAD.

Do you really think it can hurt the boys to hear these things?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Well, I don't know; I don't like it.

PETRA.

Really, mother, I think you are quite wrong there.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Perhaps. But I don't like it—not here, at home.

PETRA.

There's no end of hypocrisy both at home and at school. At home you must hold your tongue, and at school you have to stand up and tell lies to the children.

HORSTER.

Have you to tell lies?

PETRA.

Yes; do you think we don't have to tell them many and many a thing we don't believe ourselves?

BILLING.

Ah, that's too true.

PETRA.

If only I could afford it, I should start a school myself, and things should be very different there.

BILLING.

Oh, afford it——!

HORSTER.

If you really think of doing that, Miss Stockmann, I shall be delighted to let you have a room at my place. You know my father's old house is nearly empty; there's a great big dining-room on the ground floor——

PETRA.

[*Laughing.*] Oh, thank you very much—but I'm afraid it won't come to anything.

HOVSTAD.

No, I fancy Miss Petra is more likely to go over to journalism. By the way, have you had time to look into the English novel you promised to translate for us?

PETRA.

Not yet. But you shall have it in good time.

DR. STOCKMANN *enters from his room, with the letter open in his hand.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Flourishing the letter.*] Here's news, I can tell you, that will waken up the town!

BILLING.

News?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

What news?

DR. STOCKMANN.

A great discovery, Katrina!

HOVSTAD.

Indeed?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Made by you?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Precisely—by me! [*Walks up and down.*] Now let them go on accusing me of fads and crack-brained notions. But they won't dare to! Ha-ha! I tell you they won't dare!

PETRA.

Do tell us what it is, father.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, well, give me time, and you shall hear all about it. If only I had Peter here now! This just shows how we men can go about forming judgments like the blindest moles——

HOVSTAD.

What do you mean, Doctor?

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Stopping beside the table.*] Isn't it the general opinion that our town is a healthy place?

HOVSTAD.

Of course.

DR. STOCKMANN.

A quite exceptionally healthy place, indeed—a place to be warmly recommended, both to invalids and people in health——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

My dear Thomas——

DR. STOCKMANN.

And assuredly we haven't failed to recommend and belaud it. I've sung its praises again and again, both in the *Messenger* and in pamphlets——

HOVSTAD.

Well, what then?

DR. STOCKMANN.

These Baths, that we have called the pulse of the town, its vital nerve, and—and the devil knows what else——

BILLING.

"Our city's palpitating heart," I once ventured to call them in a convivial moment——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, I daresay. Well—do you know what they really are, these mighty, magnificent, belauded Baths, that have cost so much money—do you know what they are?

HOVSTAD.

No, what are they?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Do tell us.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Simply a pestiferous hole.

PETRA.

The Baths, father?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*At the same time.*] Our Baths!

HOVSTAD.

[*Also at the same time.*] But, Doctor——!

BILLING.

Oh, it's incredible!

DR. STOCKMANN.

I tell you the whole place is a poisonous whited-sepulchre; noxious in the highest degree! All that filth up there in the Mill Dale—the stuff that smells so horribly—taints the water in the feed-pipes of the Pump-Room; and the same accursëd poisonous refuse oozes out by the beach——

HOVSTAD.

Where the sea-baths are?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Exactly.

HOVSTAD.

But how are you so sure of all this, Doctor?

DR. STOCKMANN.

I've investigated the whole thing as conscientiously as possible. I've long had my suspicions about it. Last

year we had some extraordinary cases of illness among the patients—both typhoid and gastric attacks——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Yes, I remember.

DR. STOCKMANN.

We thought at the time that the visitors had brought the infection with them; but afterwards—last winter—I began to question that. So I set about testing the water as well as I could.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

It was t h a t you were working so hard at!

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, you may well say I've worked, Katrina. But here, you know, I hadn't the necessary scientific appliances; so I sent samples both of our drinking-water and of our sea-water to the University, for exact analysis by a chemist.

HOVSTAD.

And you have received his report?

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Showing letter.*] Here it is! And it proves beyond dispute the presence of putrefying organic matter in the water—millions of infusoria. It's absolutely pernicious to health, whether used internally or externally.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

What a blessing you found it out in time.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, you may well say that.

HOVSTAD.

And what do you intend to do now, Doctor?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Why, to set things right, of course.

HOVSTAD.

You think it can be done, then?

DR. STOCKMANN.

It m u s t be done. Else the whole Baths are useless, ruined. But there's no fear. I am quite clear as to what is required.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

But, my dear Thomas, why should you have made such a secret of all this?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Would you have had me rush all over the town and chatter about it, before I was quite certain? No, thank you; I'm not so mad as that.

PETRA.

But to us at home——

DR. STOCKMANN.

I couldn't say a word to a living soul. But to-morrow you may look in at the Badger's——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Oh, Thomas!

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well well, at your grandfather's. The old fellow will be astonished! He thinks I'm not quite right in my head—yes, and plenty of others think the same, I've noticed. But now these good people shall see—yes, they shall see now! [*Walks up and down rubbing his hands.*] What a stir there will be in the town, Katrina! Just think of it! All the water-pipes will have to be relaid.

HOVSTAD.

[*Rising.*] All the water-pipes——?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Why, of course. The intake is too low down; it must be moved much higher up.

PETRA.

So you were right, after all.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, do you remember, Petra? I wrote against it when they were beginning the works. But no one would listen to me then. Now, you may be sure, I shall give them my full broadside—for of course I've prepared a statement for the Directors; it has been lying ready a whole week; I've only been waiting for this report. [*Points to letter.*] But now they shall have it at once. [*Goes into his room and returns with a MS. in his hand.*] See! Four closely-written sheets! And I'll enclose the

report. A newspaper, Katrina! Get me something to wrap them up in. There—that's it. Give it to—to—[*Stamps.*]—what the devil's her name? Give it to the girl, I mean, and tell her to take it at once to the Burgomaster.

[MRS. STOCKMANN *goes out with the packet through the dining-room.*

PETRA.

What do you think Uncle Peter will say, father?

DR. STOCKMANN.

What should he say? He can't possibly be otherwise than pleased that so important a fact has been brought to light.

HOVSTAD.

I suppose you will let me put a short announcement of your discovery in the *Messenger*.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, I shall be much obliged if you will.

HOVSTAD.

It is highly desirable that the public should know about it as soon as possible.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, certainly.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Returning.*] She's gone with it.

BILLING.

Strike me dead if you won't be the first man in the town, Doctor!

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Walks up and down in high glee.*] Oh, nonsense! After all, I have done no more than my duty. I've been a lucky treasure-hunter, that's all. But all the same——

BILLING.

Hovstad, don't you think the town ought to get up a torchlight procession in honour of Dr. Stockmann?

HOVSTAD.

I shall certainly propose it.

BILLING.

And I'll talk it over with Aslaksen.

DR. STOCKMANN.

No, my dear friends; let all such claptrap alone. I won't hear of anything of the sort. And if the Directors should want to raise my salary, I won't accept it. I tell you, Katrina, I will not accept it.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

You are quite right, Thomas.

PETRA.

[*Raising her glass.*] Your health, father!

HOVSTAD *and* BILLING.

Your health, your health, Doctor!

HORSTER.

[*Clinking glasses with the* DOCTOR.] I hope you may have nothing but joy of your discovery.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Thanks, thanks, my dear friends! I can't tell you how happy I am—! Oh, what a blessing it is to feel that you have deserved well of your native town and your fellow citizens. Hurrah, Katrina!

[*He puts both his arms round her neck, and whirls her round with him.* MRS. STOCKMANN *screams and struggles. A burst of laughter, applause, and cheers for the* DOCTOR. *The boys thrust their heads in at the door.*

ACT SECOND

The DOCTOR'S *sitting-room. The dining-room door is closed. Morning.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Enters from the dining-room with a sealed letter in her hand, goes to the foremost door on the right, and peeps in.*] Are you there, Thomas?

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Within.*] Yes, I have just come in. [*Enters.*] What is it?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

A letter from your brother. [*Hands it to him.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Aha, let us see. [*Opens the envelope and reads.*] "The MS. sent me is returned herewith——" [*Reads on, mumbling to himself.*] H'm——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Well, what does he say?

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Putting the paper in his pocket.*] Nothing; only that he'll come up himself about midday.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Then be sure you remember to stay at home.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh, I can easily manage that; I've finished my morning's visits.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

I am very curious to know how he takes it.

DR. STOCKMANN.

You'll see he won't be over-pleased that it is I that have made the discovery, and not he himself.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Ah, that's just what I'm afraid of.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Of course at bottom he'll be glad. But still—Peter is damnably unwilling that any one but himself should do anything for the good of the town.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Do you know, Thomas, I think you might stretch a point, and share the honour with him. Couldn't it appear that it was he that put you on the track——?

DR. STOCKMANN.

By all means, for aught I care. If only I can get things put straight——

Old MORTEN KIIL *puts his head in at the hall door, and asks slyly:*

MORTEN KIIL.

Is it—is it true?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Going towards him.*] Father—is that you?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Hallo, father-in-law! Good morning, good morning

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Do come in.

MORTEN KIIL.

Yes, if it's true; if not, I'm off again.

DR. STOCKMANN.

If what is true?

MORTEN KIIL.

This crazy business about the water-works. Now is it true?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Why, of course it is. But how came y o u to hear of it?

MORTEN KIIL.

[*Coming in.*] Petra looked in on her way to the school——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh, did she?

MORTEN KIIL.

Ay ay—and she told me—. I thought she was only making game of me; but that's not like Petra either.

DR. STOCKMANN.

No, indeed; how could you think so?

MORTEN KIIL.

Oh, you can never be sure of anybody. You may be made a fool of before you know where you are. So it is true, after all?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Most certainly it is. Do sit down, father-in-law. [*Forces him down on the sofa.*] Now isn't it a real blessing for the town——?

MORTEN KIIL.

[*Suppressing his laughter.*] A blessing for the town?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, that I made this discovery in time——

MORTEN KIIL.

[*As before.*] Ay, ay, ay!—Well, I could never have believed that you would play monkey-tricks with your very own brother.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Monkey-tricks!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Why, father dear——

MORTEN KIIL.

[*Resting his hands and chin on the top of his stick and blinking slyly at the* DOCTOR.] What was it again?

Wasn't it that some animals had got into the water-pipes?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes; infusorial animals.

MORTEN KIIL.

And any number of these animals had got in, Petra said—whole swarms of them.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Certainly; hundreds of thousands.

MORTEN KIIL.

But no one can see them—isn't that it?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Quite right; no one can see them.

MORTEN KIIL.

[*With a quiet, chuckling laugh.*] I'll be damned if that isn't the best thing I've heard of you yet.

DR. STOCKMANN.

What do you mean?

MORTEN KIIL.

But you'll never in this world make the Burgomaster take in anything of the sort.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, that we shall see.

MORTEN KIIL.

Do you really think he'll be so crazy?

DR. STOCKMANN.

I hope the whole town will be so crazy.

MORTEN KIIL.

The whole town! Well, I don't say but it may. But it serves them right; it'll teach them a lesson. They wanted to be so much cleverer than we old fellows. They hounded me out of the Town Council. Yes; I tell you they hounded me out like a dog, that they did. But now it's their turn. Just you keep up the game with them, Stockmann.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, but, father-in-law——

MORTEN KIIL.

Keep it up, I say. [*Rising.*] If you can make the Burgomaster and his gang eat humble pie, I'll give a hundred crowns straight away to the poor.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Come, that's good of you.

MORTEN KIIL.

Of course I've little enough to throw away; but if you can manage that, I shall certainly remember the poor at Christmas-time, to the tune of fifty crowns.

HOVSTAD *enters from hall.*

HOVSTAD.

Good morning! [*Pausing.*] Oh! I beg your pardon——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Not at all. Come in, come in.

MORTEN KIIL.

[*Chuckling again.*] He! Is he in it too?

HOVSTAD.

What do you mean?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, of course he is.

MORTEN KIIL.

I might have known it! It's to go into the papers. Ah, you're the one, Stockmann! Do you two lay your heads together; I'm off.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh no; don't go yet, father-in-law.

MORTEN KIIL.

No, I'm off now. Play them all the monkey-tricks you can think of. Deuce take me but you shan't lose by it. [*He goes,* MRS. STOCKMANN *accompanying him.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Laughing.*] What do you think—? The old fellow doesn't believe a word of all this about the water-works.

HOVSTAD.

Was that what he——?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes; that was what we were talking about. And I daresay you have come on the same business?

HOVSTAD.

Yes. Have you a moment to spare, Doctor?

DR. STOCKMANN.

As many as you like, my dear fellow.

HOVSTAD.

Have you heard anything from the Burgomaster?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Not yet. He'll be here presently.

HOVSTAD.

I have been thinking the matter over since last evening.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well?

HOVSTAD.

To you, as a doctor and a man of science, this business of the water-works appears an isolated affair. I daresay it hasn't occurred to you that a good many other things are bound up with it?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Indeed! In what way? Let us sit down, my dear fellow.—No; there, on the sofa.

[HOVSTAD *sits on sofa; the* DOCTOR *in an easy-chair on the other side of the table.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, so you think——?

HOVSTAD.

You said yesterday that the water is polluted by impurities in the soil.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, undoubtedly; the mischief comes from that poisonous swamp up in the Mill Dale.

HOVSTAD.

Excuse me, Doctor, but I think it comes from a very different swamp.

DR. STOCKMANN.

What swamp may that be?

HOVSTAD.

The swamp in which our whole municipal life is rotting.

DR. STOCKMANN.

The devil, Mr. Hovstad! What notion is this you've got hold of?

HOVSTAD.

All the affairs of the town have gradually drifted into the hands of a pack of bureaucrats——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Come now, they're not all bureaucrats.

HOVSTAD.

No; but those who are not are the friends and adherents of those who are. We are entirely under the thumb of a ring of wealthy men, men of old family and position in the town.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, but they are also men of ability and insight.

HOVSTAD.

Did they show ability and insight when they laid the water-pipes where they are?

DR. STOCKMANN.

No; that, of course, was a piece of stupidity. But that will be set right now.

HOVSTAD.

Do you think it will go so smoothly?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, smoothly or not, it will have to be done.

HOVSTAD.

Yes, if the press exerts its influence.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Not at all necessary, my dear fellow; I am sure my brother——

HOVSTAD.

Excuse me, Doctor, but I must tell you that I think of taking the matter up.

DR. STOCKMANN.

In the paper?

HOVSTAD.

Yes. When I took over the *People's Messenger*, I was determined to break up the ring of obstinate old blockheads who held everything in their hands.

DR. STOCKMANN.

But you told me yourself what came of it. You nearly ruined the paper.

HOVSTAD.

Yes, at that time we had to draw in our horns, that's true enough. The whole Bath scheme might have fallen through if these men had been sent about their business. But now the Baths are an accomplished fact, and we can get on without these august personages.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Get on without them, yes; but still we owe them a great deal.

HOVSTAD.

The debt shall be duly acknowledged. But a journalist of my democratic tendencies cannot let such an

opportunity slip through his fingers. We must explode the tradition of official infallibility. That rubbish must be got rid of, like every other superstition.

DR. STOCKMANN.

There I am with you with all my heart, Mr. Hovstad. If it's a superstition, away with it!

HOVSTAD.

I should be sorry to attack the Burgomaster, as he is your brother. But I know you think with me—the truth before all other considerations.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Why, of course. [*Vehemently.*] But still—! but still——!

HOVSTAD.

You mustn't think ill of me. I am neither more self-interested nor more ambitious than other men.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Why, my dear fellow—who says you are?

HOVSTAD.

I come of humble folk, as you know; and I have had ample opportunities of seeing what the lower classes really require. And that is to have a share in the direction of public affairs, Doctor. That is what develops ability and knowledge and self-respect——

DR. STOCKMANN.

I understand that perfectly.

HOVSTAD.

Yes; and I think a journalist incurs a heavy responsibility if he lets slip a chance of helping to emancipate the downtrodden masses. I know well enough that our oligarchy will denounce me as an agitator, and so forth; but what do I care? If only my conscience is clear, I——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Just so, just so, my dear Mr. Hovstad. But still—deuce take it——! [*A knock at the door.*] Come in!

ASLAKSEN, *the printer, appears at the door leading to the hall. He is humbly but respectably dressed in black, wears a white necktie, slightly crumpled, and has a silk hat and gloves in his hand.*

ASLAKSEN.

[*Bowing.*] I beg pardon, Doctor, for making so bold——

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Rising.*] Hallo! If it isn't Mr. Aslaksen!

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, it's me, Doctor.

HOVSTAD.

[*Rising.*] Is it me you want, Aslaksen?

ASLAKSEN.

No, not at all. I didn't know you were here. No, it's the Doctor himself——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, what can I do for you?

ASLAKSEN.

Is it true, what Mr. Billing tells me, that you're going to get us a better set of water-works?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, for the Baths.

ASLAKSEN.

Of course, of course. Then I just looked in to say that I'll back up the movement with all my might.

HOVSTAD.

[*To the* DOCTOR.] You see!

DR. STOCKMANN.

I'm sure I thank you heartily; but——

ASLAKSEN.

You may find it no such bad thing to have us small middle-class men at your back. We form what you may call a compact majority in the town—when we really make up our minds, that's to say. And it's always well to have the majority with you, Doctor.

DR. STOCKMANN.

No doubt, no doubt; but I can't conceive that any special measures will be necessary in this case. I should think in so clear and straightforward a matter——

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, but all the same, it can do no harm. I know the local authorities very well—the powers that be are not over ready to adopt suggestions from outsiders. So I think it wouldn't be amiss if we made some sort of a demonstration.

HOVSTAD.

Precisely my opinion.

DR. STOCKMANN.

A demonstration, you say? But in what way would you demonstrate?

ASLAKSEN.

Of course with great moderation, Doctor. I always insist upon moderation; for moderation is a citizen's first virtue—at least that's my way of thinking.

DR. STOCKMANN.

We all know that, Mr. Aslaksen.

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, I think my moderation is generally recognised. And this affair of the water-works is very important for us small middle-class men. The Baths bid fair to become, as you might say, a little gold-mine for the town. We shall all have to live by the Baths, especially we house-owners. So we want to support the Baths all we can; and as I am Chairman of the House-owners' Association——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well——?

ASLAKSEN.

And as I'm an active worker for the Temperance[1] Society—of course you know, Doctor, that I'm a temperance man?

DR. STOCKMANN.

To be sure, to be sure.

ASLAKSEN.

Well, you'll understand that I come in contact with a great many people. And as I'm known to be a prudent and law-abiding citizen, as you yourself remarked, Doctor, I have certain influence in the town, and hold some power in my hands—though I say it that shouldn't.

DR. STOCKMANN.

I know that very well, Mr. Aslaksen.

ASLAKSEN.

Well then, you see—it would be easy for me to get up an address, if it came to a pinch.

DR. STOCKMANN.

An address?

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, a kind of vote of thanks to you, from the citizens of the town, for your action in a matter of such general concern. Of course it will have to be drawn up with all fitting moderation, so as to give no offence to the authori-

[1] The word "mådehold," in Norwegian, means both "moderation" and "temperance."

ties and parties in power. But so long as we're careful about that, no one can take it ill, I should think.

HOVSTAD.

Well, even if they didn't particularly like it——

ASLAKSEN.

No, no, no; no offence to the powers that be, Mr. Hovstad. No opposition to people that can take it out of us again so easily. I've had enough of that in my time; no good ever comes of it. But no one can object to the free but temperate expression of a citizen's opinion.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Shaking his hand.*] I can't tell you, my dear Mr. Aslaksen, how heartily it delights me to find so much support among my fellow townsmen. I'm so happy—so happy! Come, you'll have a glass of sherry? Eh?

ASLAKSEN.

No, thank you; I never touch spirituous liquors.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, then, a glass of beer—what do you say to that?

ASLAKSEN.

Thanks, not that either, Doctor. I never take anything so early in the day. And now I'll be off round the town, and talk to some of the house-owners, and prepare public opinion.

DR. STOCKMANN.

It's extremely kind of you, Mr. Aslaksen; but I really cannot get it into my head that all these preparations are necessary. The affair seems to me so simple and self-evident.

ASLAKSEN.

The authorities always move slowly, Doctor—God forbid I should blame them for it——

HOVSTAD.

We'll stir them up in the paper to-morrow, Aslaksen.

ASLAKSEN.

No violence, Mr. Hovstad. Proceed with moderation, or you'll do nothing with them. Take my advice; I've picked up experience in the school of life.—And now I'll say good morning, Doctor. You know now that at least you have us small middle-class men behind you, solid as a wall. You have the compact majority on your side, Doctor.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Many thanks, my dear Mr. Aslaksen. [*Holds out his hand.*] Good-bye, good-bye.

ASLAKSEN.

Are you coming to the office, Mr. Hovstad?

HOVSTAD.

I shall come on presently. I have still one or two things to arrange.

ASLAKSEN.

Very well.

[Bows and goes. DR. STOCKMANN *accompanies him into the hall.*

HOVSTAD.

[*As the* DOCTOR *re-enters.*] Well, what do you say to that, Doctor? Don't you think it is high time we should give all this weak-kneed, half-hearted cowardice a good shaking-up?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Are you speaking of Aslaksen?

HOVSTAD.

Yes, I am. He's a decent enough fellow, but he's one of those who are sunk in the swamp. And most people here are just like him: they are for ever wavering and wobbling from side to side; what with scruples and misgivings, they never dare advance a step.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, but Aslaksen seems to me thoroughly well-intentioned.

HOVSTAD.

There is one thing I value more than good intentions, and that is an attitude of manly self-reliance.

DR. STOCKMANN.

There I am quite with you.

HOVSTAD.

So I am going to seize this opportunity, and try whether I can't for once put a little grit into their good intentions. The worship of authority must be rooted up in this town. This gross, inexcusable blunder of the water-works must be brought home clearly to every voter.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Very well. If you think it's for the good of the community, so be it; but not till I have spoken to my brother.

HOVSTAD.

At all events, I shall be writing my leader in the meantime. And if the Burgomaster won't take the matter up——

DR. STOCKMANN.

But how can you conceive his refusing?

HOVSTAD.

Oh, it's not inconceivable. And then——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well then, I promise you—; look here—in that case you may print my paper—put it in just as it is.

HOVSTAD.

May I? Is that a promise?

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Handing him the manuscript.*] There it is; take it with you. You may as well read it in any case; you can return it to me afterwards.

HOVSTAD.

Very good; I shall do so. And now, good-bye, Doctor.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Good-bye, good-bye. You'll see it will all go smoothly, Mr. Hovstad—as smoothly as possible.

HOVSTAD.

H'm—we shall see.

[*Bows and goes out through the hall.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Going to the dining-room door and looking in.*] Katrina! Hallo! are you back, Petra?

PETRA.

[*Entering.*] Yes, I've just got back from school.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Entering.*] Hasn't he been here yet?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Peter? No; but I have been having a long talk with Hovstad. He's quite enthusiastic about my discovery. It turns out to be of much wider import than I thought at first. So he has placed his paper at my disposal, if I should require it.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Do you think you will?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Not I! But at the same time, one cannot but be proud to know that the enlightened, independent press is on one's side. And what do you think? I have had a visit from the Chairman of the House-owners' Association too.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Really? What did he want?

DR. STOCKMANN.

To assure me of his support. They will all stand by me at a pinch. Katrina, do you know what I have behind me?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Behind you? No. What have you behind you?

DR. STOCKMANN.

The compact majority!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Oh! Is that good for you, Thomas?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, indeed; I should think it w a s good. [*Rubbing his hands as he walks up and down.*] Great God! what a delight it is to feel oneself in such brotherly unison with one's fellow townsmen?

PETRA.

And to do so much that's good and useful, father!

DR. STOCKMANN.

And all for one's native town, too!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

There's the bell.

DR. STOCKMANN.

That must be he. [*Knock at the door.*] Come in!

Enter BURGOMASTER STOCKMANN *from the hall.*

BURGOMASTER.

Good morning.

DR. STOCKMANN.

I'm glad to see you, Peter.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Good morning, brother-in-law. How are you?

BURGOMASTER.

Oh, thanks, so-so. [*To the* DOCTOR.] Yesterday evening, after office hours, I received from you a dissertation upon the state of the water at the Baths.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes. Have you read it?

BURGOMASTER.

I have

DR. STOCKMANN.

And what do you think of the affair?

BURGOMASTER.

H'm— [*With a sidelong glance.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Come, Petra.

[*She and* PETRA *go into the room on the left.*

BURGOMASTER.

[*After a pause.*] Was it necessary to make all these investigations behind my back?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, till I was absolutely certain, I——

BURGOMASTER.

And are you absolutely certain now?

DR. STOCKMANN.

My paper must surely have convinced you of that.

BURGOMASTER.

Is it your intention to submit this statement to the Board of Directors, as a sort of official document?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Of course. Something must be done in the matter, and that promptly.

BURGOMASTER.

As usual, you use very strong expressions in your statement. Amongst other things, you say that what we offer our visitors is a slow poison.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Why, Peter, what else can it be called? Only think—poisoned water both internally and externally! And that to poor invalids who come to us in all confidence, and pay us handsomely to cure them!

BURGOMASTER.

And then you announce as your conclusion that we must build a sewer to carry off the alleged impurities from the Mill Dale, and must re-lay all the water-pipes.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes. Can you suggest any other plan?—I know of none.

BURGOMASTER.

I found a pretext for looking in at the town engineer's this morning, and—in a half-jesting way—I mentioned these alterations as things we might possibly have to consider, at some future time.

DR. STOCKMANN.

At some future time!

BURGOMASTER.

Of course he smiled at what he thought my extravagance. Have you taken the trouble to think what your proposed alterations would cost? From what the engineer said, I gathered that the expenses would probably amount up to several hundred thousand crowns.

DR. STOCKMANN.

So much as that?

BURGOMASTER.

Yes. But that is not the worst. The work would take at least two years.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Two years! Do you mean to say two whole years?

BURGOMASTER.

At least. And what are we to do with the Baths in the meanwhile? Are we to close them? We should have no alternative. Do you think any one would come here, if it got abroad that the water was pestilential?

DR. STOCKMANN.

But, Peter, that's precisely what it is.

BURGOMASTER.

And all this now, just now, when the Baths are doing so well! Neighbouring towns, too, are not without their claims to rank as health-resorts. Do you think they would not at once set to work to divert the full stream of visitors to themselves? Undoubtedly they would; and we should be left stranded. We should probably have to give up the whole costly undertaking; and so you would have ruined your native town.

DR. STOCKMANN.

I—ruined——!

BURGOMASTER.

It is only through the Baths that the town has any future worth speaking of. You surely know that as well as I do.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Then what do you think should be done?

BURGOMASTER.

I have not succeeded in convincing myself that the condition of the water at the Baths is as serious as your statement represents.

DR. STOCKMANN.

I tell you it's if anything worse—or will be in the summer, when the hot weather sets in.

BURGOMASTER.

I repeat that I believe you exaggerate greatly. A competent physician should know what measures to take—he should be able to obviate deleterious influences, and to counteract them in case they should make themselves unmistakably felt.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Indeed—? And then—?

BURGOMASTER.

The existing water-works are, once for all, a fact, and must naturally be treated as such. But when the time comes, the Directors will probably not be indisposed to consider whether it may not be possible, without unreasonable pecuniary sacrifices, to introduce certain improvements.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And do you imagine I could ever be a party to such dishonesty?

BURGOMASTER.

Dishonesty?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, it would be dishonesty—a fraud, a lie, an absolute crime against the public, against society as a whole!

BURGOMASTER.

I have not, as I before remarked, been able to convince myself that there is really any such imminent danger.

DR. STOCKMANN.

You have! You must have! I know that my demonstration is absolutely clear and convincing. And you understand it perfectly, Peter, only you won't admit it. It was you who insisted that both the Bath-buildings and the water-works should be placed where they now are; and it's t h a t—it's that damned blunder that you won't confess. Pshaw! Do you think I don't see through you?

BURGOMASTER.

And even if it were so? If I do watch over my reputation with a certain anxiety, I do it for the good of the town. Without moral authority I cannot guide and direct affairs in the way I consider most conducive to the general welfare. Therefore—and on various other grounds—it is of great moment to me that your statement should not be submitted to the Board of Directors. It must be kept back, for the good of the community. Later on I will bring up the matter for discussion, and we will do the best we can, quietly; but not a word, not a whisper, of this unfortunate business must come to the public ears.

DR. STOCKMANN.

But it can't be prevented now, my dear Peter.

BURGOMASTER.

It must and shall be prevented.

DR. STOCKMANN.

It can't be, I tell you; far too many people know about it already.

BURGOMASTER.

Know about it! Who? Surely not those fellows on the *People's Messenger*——?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh yes; they know. The liberal, independent press will take good care that you do your duty.

BURGOMASTER.

[*After a short pause.*] You are an amazingly reckless man, Thomas. Have not you reflected what the consequences of this may be to yourself?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Consequences?—Consequences to me?

BURGOMASTER.

Yes—to you and yours.

DR. STOCKMANN.

What the devil do you mean?

BURGOMASTER.

I believe I have always shown myself ready and willing to lend you a helping hand.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, you have, and I thank you for it.

BURGOMASTER.

I ask for no thanks. Indeed, I was in some measure forced to act as I did—for my own sake. I always hoped I should be able to keep you a little in check, if I helped to improve your pecuniary position.

DR. STOCKMANN.

What! So it was only for your own sake——!

BURGOMASTER.

In a measure, I say. It is painful for a man in an official position, when his nearest relative goes and compromises himself time after time.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And you think I do that?

BURGOMASTER.

Yes, unfortunately, you do, without knowing it. Yours is a turbulent, unruly, rebellious spirit. And then you have an unhappy propensity for rushing into print upon every possible and impossible occasion. You no sooner hit upon an idea than you must needs write a newspaper article or a whole pamphlet about it.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Isn't it a citizen's duty, when he has conceived a new idea, to communicate it to the public!

BURGOMASTER.

Oh, the public has no need for new ideas. The public gets on best with the good old recognised ideas it has already.

DR. STOCKMANN.

You say that right out!

BURGOMASTER.

Yes, I must speak frankly to you for once. Hitherto I have tried to avoid it, for I know how irritable you are; but now I must tell you the truth, Thomas You have no conception how much you injure yourself by your officiousness. You complain of the authorities, ay, of the Government itself—you cry them down and maintain that you have been slighted, persecuted. But what else can you expect, with your impossible disposition?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh, indeed! So I am impossible, am I?

BURGOMASTER.

Yes, Thomas, you are an impossible man to work with. I know that from experience. You have no consideration for any one or any thing; you seem quite to forget that you have me to thank for your position as medical officer of the Baths——

DR. STOCKMANN.

It was mine by right! Mine, and no one else's! I was the first to discover the town's capabilities as a watering-place; I saw them, and, at that time, I alone. For years I fought single-handed for this idea of mine; I wrote and wrote——

BURGOMASTER.

No doubt; but then the right time had not come. Of course, in that out-of-the-world corner, you could not judge of that. As soon as the propitious moment arrived, I—and others—took the matter in hand——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, and you went and bungled the whole of my glorious plan. Oh, we see now what a set of wiseacres you were!

BURGOMASTER.

All *I* can see is that you are again seeking an outlet for your pugnacity. You want to make an onslaught on your superiors—that is an old habit of yours. You cannot endure any authority over you; you look askance at any one who holds a higher post than your own; you regard him as a personal enemy—and then you care nothing what kind of weapon you use against him. But now I have shown you how much is at stake for the town, and consequently for me too. And therefore I warn you, Thomas, that I am inexorable in the demand I am about to make of you!

DR. STOCKMANN.

What demand?

BURGOMASTER.

As you have not had the sense to refrain from chattering to outsiders about this delicate business, which should have been kept an official secret, of course it cannot now be hushed up. All sorts of rumours will get abroad, and evil-disposed persons will invent all sorts of additions to them. It will therefore be necessary for you publicly to contradict these rumours.

DR. STOCKMANN.

I! How? I don't understand you?

BURGOMASTER.

We expect that, after further investigation, you will come to the conclusion that the affair is not nearly so serious or pressing as you had at first imagined.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Aha! So you expect that?

BURGOMASTER.

Furthermore, we expect you to express your confidence that the Board of Directors will thoroughly and conscientiously carry out all measures for the remedying of any possible defects.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, but that you'll never be able to do, so long as you go on tinkering and patching. I tell you that, Peter; and it's my deepest, sincerest conviction——

BURGOMASTER.

As an official, you have no right to hold any individual conviction.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Starting.*] No right to——?

BURGOMASTER.

As an official, I say. In your private capacity, of course, it is another matter. But as a subordinate official of the Baths, you have no right to express any conviction at issue with that of your superiors.

DR. STOCKMANN.

This is too much! I, a doctor, a man of science, have no right to——!

BURGOMASTER.

The matter in question is not a purely scientific one; it is a complex affair; it has both a technical and an economic side.

DR. STOCKMANN.

What the devil do I care what it is! I will be free to speak my mind upon any subject under the sun!

BURGOMASTER.

As you please—so long as it does not concern the Baths. With them we forbid you to meddle.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Shouts.*] You forbid——! You! A set of——

BURGOMASTER.

I forbid it—*I*, your chief; and when I issue an order, you have simply to obey.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Controlling himself.*] Upon my word, Peter, if you weren't my brother——

PETRA.

[*Tears open the door.*] Father, you shan't submit to this!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Following her.*] Petra, Petra!

BURGOMASTER.

Ah! So we have been listening!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

The partition is so thin, we couldn't help——

PETRA.

I stood and listened on purpose.

BURGOMASTER.

Well, on the whole, I am not sorry——

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Coming nearer to him.*] You spoke to me of forbidding and obeying——

BURGOMASTER.

You have forced me to adopt that tone.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And am I to give myself the lie, in a public declaration?

BURGOMASTER.

We consider it absolutely necessary that you should issue a statement in the terms indicated.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And if I do not obey?

BURGOMASTER.

Then we shall ourselves put forth a statement to reassure the public.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well and good; then I shall write against you. I shall stick to my point and prove that *I* am right, and you wrong. And what will you do then?

BURGOMASTER.

Then I shall be unable to prevent your dismissal.

DR. STOCKMANN.

What——!

PETRA.

Father! Dismissal!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Dismissal!

BURGOMASTER.

Your dismissal from the Baths. I shall be compelled to move that notice be given you at once, and that you have henceforth no connection whatever with the Baths.

DR. STOCKMANN.

You would dare to do that!

BURGOMASTER.

It is you who are playing the daring game.

PETRA.

Uncle, this is a shameful way to treat a man like father!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Do be quiet, Petra!

BURGOMASTER.

[*Looking at* PETRA.] Aha! We have opinions of our own already, eh? To be sure, to be sure! [*To* MRS. STOCKMANN.] Sister-in-law, you are presumably the most rational member of this household. Use all your influence with your husband; try to make him realise what all this will involve both for his family——

DR. STOCKMANN.

My family concerns myself alone!

BURGOMASTER.

——both for his family, I say, and for the town he lives in.

DR. STOCKMANN.

It is I that have the real good of the town at heart! I want to lay bare the evils that, sooner or later, must come to light. Ah! You shall see whether I love my native town.

BURGOMASTER.

You, who, in your blind obstinacy, want to cut off the town's chief source of prosperity!

DR. STOCKMANN.

That source is poisoned, man! Are you mad? We live by trafficking in filth and corruption! The whole of our flourishing social life is rooted in a lie!

BURGOMASTER.

Idle fancies—or worse. The man who scatters broadcast such offensive insinuations against his native place must be an enemy of society.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Going towards him.*] You dare to——!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Throwing herself between them.*] Thomas!

PETRA.

[*Seizing her father's arm.*] Keep calm, father!

BURGOMASTER.

I will not expose myself to violence. You have had your warning now. Reflect upon what is due to yourself and to your family. Good-bye. [*He goes.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Walking up and down.*] And I must put up with such treatment! In my own house, Katrina! What do you say to that!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Indeed, it's a shame and a disgrace, Thomas——

PETRA.

Oh, if I could only get hold of uncle——!

DR. STOCKMANN.

It's my own fault. I ought to have stood up against them long ago—to have shown my teeth—and used them too!—And to be called an enemy of society! Me! I won't bear it; by Heaven, I won't!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

But my dear Thomas, after all, your brother has the power——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, but I have the right.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Ah yes, right, right! What good does it do to have the right, if you haven't any might?

PETRA.

Oh, mother—how can you talk so?

DR. STOCKMANN.

What! No good, in a free community, to have right on your side? What an absurd idea, Katrina! And besides—haven't I the free and independent press before me—and the compact majority at my back? That is might enough, I should think!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Why, good heavens, Thomas! you're surely not thinking of——?

DR. STOCKMANN.

What am I not thinking of?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

——of setting yourself up against your brother, I mean.

DR. STOCKMANN.

What the devil would you have me do, if not stick to what is right and true?

PETRA.

Yes, that's what I should like to know?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

But it will be of no earthly use. If they won't, they won't.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Ho-ho, Katrina! just wait a while, and you shall see whether I can fight my battles to the end.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Yes, to the end of getting your dismissal; that is what will happen.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well then, I shall at any rate have done my duty towards the public, towards society—I who am called an enemy of society!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

But towards your family, Thomas? Towards us at home? Do you think t h a t is doing your duty towards those who are dependent on you?

PETRA.

Oh, mother, don't always think first of us.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Yes, it's easy for you to talk; you can stand alone if need be.—But remember the boys, Thomas; and think a little of yourself too, and of me——

DR. STOCKMANN.

You're surely out of your senses, Katrina! If I were to be such a pitiful coward as to knuckle under to this Peter and his confounded crew—should I ever have another happy hour in all my life?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

I don't know about that; but God preserve us from the happiness we shall all of us have if you persist in defying them. There you will be again, with nothing to

live on, with no regular income. I should have thought we had had enough of that in the old days. Remember them, Thomas; think of what it all means.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Struggling with himself and clenching his hands.*] And this is what these jacks-in-office can bring upon a free and honest man! Isn't it revolting, Katrina?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Yes, no doubt they are treating you shamefully. But God knows there's plenty of injustice one must just submit to in this world.—Here are the boys, Thomas. Look at them! What is to become of them? Oh no, no! you can never have the heart——

EILIF *and* MORTEN, *with school-books, have meanwhile entered.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

The boys——! [*With a sudden access of firmness and decision.*] Never, though the whole earth should crumble, will I bow my neck beneath the yoke.

[*Goes towards his room.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Following him.*] Thomas—what are you going to do?

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*At the door.*] I must have the right to look my boys in the face when they have grown into free men.

[*Goes into his room.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Bursts into tears.*] Ah, God help us all!

PETRA.

Father is true to the core. He will never give in!

[*The boys ask wonderingly what it all means;* PETRA *signs to them to be quiet.*

ACT THIRD

The Editor's Room of the "People's Messenger." In the background, to the left, an entrance-door; to the right another door, with glass panes, through which can be seen the composing-room. A door in the right-hand wall. In the middle of the room a large table covered with papers, newspapers, and books. In front, on the left, a window, and by it a desk with a high stool. A couple of arm-chairs beside the table; some other chairs along the walls. The room is dingy and cheerless, the furniture shabby, the arm-chairs dirty and torn. In the composing-room are seen a few compositors at work; further back, a hand-press in operation.

HOVSTAD *is seated at the desk, writing. Presently* BILLING *enters from the right, with the* DOCTOR'S *manuscript in his hand.*

BILLING.

Well, I must say——!

HOVSTAD.

[*Writing.*] Have you read it through?

BILLING.

[*Laying the MS. on the desk.*] Yes, I should think I had.

HOVSTAD.

Don't you think the Doctor comes out strong?

BILLING.

Strong! Why, strike me dead if he isn't crushing! Every word falls like a—well, like a sledge-hammer.

HOVSTAD.

Yes, but these fellows won't collapse at the first blow.

BILLING.

True enough; but we'll keep on hammering away, blow after blow, till the whole officialdom comes crashing down. As I sat in there reading that article, I seemed to hear the revolution thundering afar.

HOVSTAD.

[*Turning round.*] Hush! Don't let Aslaksen hear that.

BILLING.

[*In a lower voice.*] Aslaksen's a white-livered, cowardly fellow, without a spark of manhood in him. But this time you'll surely carry your point? Eh? You'll print the Doctor's paper?

HOVSTAD.

Yes, if only the Burgomaster doesn't give in——

BILLING.

That would be deuced annoying.

HOVSTAD.

Well, whatever happens, fortunately we can turn the situation to account. If the Burgomaster won't agree to

the Doctor's proposal, he'll have all the small middle-class down upon him—all the House-owners' Association, and the rest of them. And if he does agree to it, he'll fall out with the whole crew of big shareholders in the Baths, who have hitherto been his main support——

BILLING.

Yes, of course; for no doubt they'll have to fork out a lot of money——

HOVSTAD.

You may take your oath of that. And then, don't you see, when the ring is broken up, we'll din it into the public day by day that the Burgomaster is incompetent in every respect, and that all responsible positions in the town, the whole municipal government in short, must be entrusted to men of liberal ideas.

BILLING.

Strike me dead if that isn't the square truth! I see it—I see it: we are on the eve of a revolution!

[*A knock at the door.*

HOVSTAD.

Hush! [*Calls.*] Come in!

DR. STOCKMANN *enters from the back, left.*

HOVSTAD.

[*Going towards him.*] Ah, here is the Doctor. Well?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Print away, Mr. Hovstad!

HOVSTAD.

So it has come to that?

BILLING.

Hurrah!

DR. STOCKMANN.

Print away, I tell you. To be sure it has come to that. Since they will have it so, they must. War is declared, Mr. Billing!

BILLING.

War to the knife, say I! War to the death, Doctor!

DR. STOCKMANN.

This article is only the beginning. I have four or five others sketched out in my head already. But where do you keep Aslaksen?

BILLING.

[*Calling into the printing-room.*] Aslaksen! just come here a moment.

HOVSTAD.

Four or five more articles, eh? On the same subject?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh no—not at all, my dear fellow. No; they will deal with quite different matters. But they're all of a piece with the water-works and sewer question. One thing leads to another. It's just like beginning to pick at an old house, don't you know?

BILLING.

Strike me dead, but that's true! You feel you can't leave off till you've pulled the whole lumber-heap to pieces.

ASLAKSEN.

[*Enters from the printing-room.*] Pulled to pieces! Surely the Doctor isn't thinking of pulling the Baths to pieces?

HOVSTAD.

Not at all. Don't be alarmed.

DR. STOCKMANN.

No, we were talking of something quite different. Well, what do you think of my article, Mr. Hovstad?

HOVSTAD.

I think it's simply a masterpiece——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, isn't it? I'm glad you think so—very glad.

HOVSTAD.

It's so clear and to the point. One doesn't in the least need to be a specialist to understand the gist of it. I am certain every intelligent man will be on your side.

ASLAKSEN.

And all the prudent ones too, I hope?

BILLING.

Both the prudent and imprudent—in fact, almost the whole town.

ASLAKSEN.

Then I suppose we may venture to print it.

DR. STOCKMANN.

I should think so!

HOVSTAD.

It shall go in to-morrow.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, plague take it, not a day must be lost. Look here, Mr. Aslaksen, this is what I wanted to ask you: won't you take personal charge of the article?

ASLAKSEN.

Certainly I will.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Be as careful as if it were gold. No printers' errors; every word is important. I shall look in again presently; perhaps you'll be able to let me see a proof.—Ah! I can't tell you how I long to have the thing in print—to see it launched——

BILLING.

Yes, like a thunderbolt!

DR. STOCKMANN.

——and submitted to the judgment of every intelligent citizen. Oh, you have no idea what I have had to put

up with to-day. I've been threatened with all sorts of things. I was to be robbed of my clearest rights as a human being——

BILLING.

What! Your rights as a human being!

DR. STOCKMANN.

——I was to humble myself, and eat the dust; I was to set my personal interests above my deepest, holiest convictions——

BILLING.

Strike me dead, but that's too outrageous!

HOVSTAD.

Oh, what can you expect from that quarter?

DR. STOCKMANN.

But they shall find they were mistaken in me; they shall learn that in black and white, I promise them! I shall throw myself into the breach every day in the *Messenger*, bombard them with one explosive article after another——

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, but look here——

BILLING.

Hurrah! It's war! War!

DR. STOCKMANN.

I shall smite them to the earth, I shall crush them, I shall level their entrenchments to the ground in the eyes of all right-thinking men! That's what I shall do!

ASLAKSEN.

But above all things be temperate, Doctor; bombard with moderation——

BILLING.

Not at all, not at all! Don't spare the dynamite!

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Going on imperturbably.*] For now it's no mere question of water-works and sewers, you see. No, the whole community must be purged, disinfected——

BILLING.

T h e r e sounds the word of salvation!

DR. STOCKMANN.

All the old bunglers must be sent packing, you understand. And that in every possible department! Such endless vistas have opened out before me to-day. I am not quite clear about everything yet, but I shall see my way presently. It's young and vigorous standard-bearers we must look for, my friends; we must have new captains at all the outposts.

BILLING.

Hear, hear!

DR. STOCKMANN.

And if only we hold together, it will go so smoothly, so smoothly! The whole revolution will glide off the stocks just like a ship. Don't you think so?

HOVSTAD.

For my part, I believe we have now every prospect of placing our municipal affairs in the right hands.

ASLAKSEN.

And if only we proceed with moderation, I really don't think there can be any danger.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Who the devil cares whether there's danger or not! What I do, I do in the name of truth and for conscience' sake.

HOVSTAD.

You are a man to be backed up, Doctor.

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, there's no doubt the Doctor is a true friend to the town; he's what I call a friend of society.

BILLING.

Strike me dead if Dr. Stockmann isn't a Friend of the People, Aslaksen!

ASLAKSEN.

I have no doubt the House-owners' Association will soon adopt that expression.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Shaking their hands, deeply moved.*] Thanks, thanks, my dear, faithful friends; it does me good to hear you. My respected brother called me something very different. Never mind! Trust me to pay him back with interest! But I must be off now to see a poor devil of a patient. I shall look in again, though. Be sure you look after the article, Mr. Aslaksen; and, whatever you do, don't leave out any of my notes of exclamation! Rather put in a few more! Well, good-bye for the present, good-bye, good-bye.

[*Mutual salutations while they accompany him to the door. He goes out.*

HOVSTAD.

He will be invaluable to us.

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, so long as he confines himself to this matter of the Baths. But if he goes further, it will scarcely be advisable to follow him.

HOVSTAD.

H'm—that entirely depends on——

BILLING.

You're always so confoundedly timid, Aslaksen.

ASLAKSEN.

Timid? Yes, when it's a question of attacking local authorities, I a m timid, Mr. Billing; I have learnt cau-

tion in the school of experience, let me tell you. But start me on the higher politics, confront me with the Government itself, and then see if I'm timid.

BILLING.

No, you're not; but that's just where your inconsistency comes in.

ASLAKSEN.

The fact is, I am keenly alive to my responsibilities. If you attack the Government, you at least do society no harm; for the men attacked don't care a straw, you see—they stay where they are all the same. But l o c a l authorities can be turned out; and then we might get some incompetent set into power, to the irreparable injury both of house-owners and other people.

HOVSTAD.

But the education of citizens by self-government—do you never think of t h a t?

ASLAKSEN.

When a man has solid interests to protect, he can't think of everything, Mr. Hovstad.

HOVSTAD.

Then I hope I may never have solid interests to protect.

BILLING.

Hear, hear!

ASLAKSEN.

[*Smiling.*] H'm! [*Points to the desk.*] Governor Stensgård[1] sat in that editorial chair before you.

BILLING.

[*Spitting.*] Pooh! A turncoat like that!

HOVSTAD.

I am no weathercock—and never will be.

ASLAKSEN.

A politician should never be too sure of anything on earth, Mr. Hovstad. And as for you, Mr. Billing, you ought to take in a reef or two, I should say, now that you are applying for the secretaryship to the Town Council.

BILLING.

I——!

HOVSTAD.

Is that so, Billing?

BILLING.

Well, yes—but, deuçe take it, you understand, I'm only doing it to spite their high-mightinesses.

ASLAKSEN.

Well, that has nothing to do with me. But if I am to be accused of cowardice and inconsistency, I should just

[1] It will be remembered that Aslaksen figures in *The League of Youth*, of which Stensgård is the central character. Stensgård, we see, has justified Lundestad's prophecy by attaining the high administrative dignity of "Stiftamtmand," here roughly translated "Governor."

like to point out t h i s: My political record is open to every one. I have not changed at all, except in becoming more moderate. My heart still belongs to the people; but I don't deny that my reason inclines somewhat towards the authorities—the local ones, I mean.

[*Goes into the printing-room.*

BILLING.

Don't you think we should try to get rid of him, Hovstad?

HOVSTAD.

Do you know of any one else that will pay for our paper and printing?

BILLING.

What a confounded nuisance it is to have no capital!

HOVSTAD.

[*Sitting down by the desk.*] Yes, if we only had that——

BILLING.

Suppose you applied to Dr. Stockmann?

HOVSTAD.

[*Turning over his papers.*] What would be the good? He hasn't a rap.

BILLING.

No; but he has a good man behind him—old Morten Kiil—"The Badger," as they call him.

HOVSTAD.

[*Writing.*] Are you so sure he has money?

BILLING.

Yes, strike me dead if he hasn't! And part of it must certainly go to Stockmann's family. He's bound to provide for—for the children at any rate.

HOVSTAD.

[*Half turning.*] Are you counting on t h a t?

BILLING.

Counting? How should I be counting on it?

HOVSTAD.

Best not! And that secretaryship you shouldn't count on either; for I can assure you you won't get it.

BILLING.

Do you think I don't know that? A refusal is the very thing I want. Such a rebuff fires the spirit of opposition in you, gives you a fresh supply of gall, as it were; and that's just what you need in a god-forsaken hole like this, where anything really stimulating so seldom happens.

HOVSTAD.

[*Writing.*] Yes, yes.

BILLING.

Well—they shall soon hear from me!—Now I'll go and write the appeal to the House-owners' Association.

[*Goes into the room on the right.*

HOVSTAD.

[*Sits at his desk, biting his penholder, and says slowly:*] H'm—so that's the way of it.—[*A knock at the door.*] Come in.

PETRA *enters from the back, left.*

HOVSTAD.

[*Rising.*] What! Is it you? Here?

PETRA.

Yes; please excuse me——

HOVSTAD.

[*Offering her an arm-chair.*] Won't you sit down?

PETRA.

No, thanks; I must go again directly.

HOVSTAD.

Perhaps you bring a message from your father——?

PETRA.

No, I have come on my own account. [*Takes a book from the pocket of her cloak.*] Here is that English story.

HOVSTAD.

Why have you brought it back?

PETRA.

Because I won't translate it.

HOVSTAD.

But you promised——

PETRA.

Yes; but then I hadn't read it. I suppose you have not read it either?

HOVSTAD.

No; you know I can't read English; but——

PETRA.

Exactly; and that's why I wanted to tell you that you must find something else. [*Putting the book on the table.*] This will never do for the *Messenger*.

HOVSTAD.

Why not?

PETRA.

Because it flies in the face of all your convictions.

HOVSTAD.

Well, for that matter——

PETRA.

You don't understand me. It makes out that a supernatural power looks after the so-called good people in this world, and turns everything to their advantage at last; while all the so-called bad people are punished.

HOVSTAD.

Yes, but that's all right. That's the very thing the public like.

PETRA.

And would y o u supply the public with such stuff? You don't believe a word of it yourself. You know well enough that things do not really happen like that.

HOVSTAD.

Of course not; but an editor can't always do as he likes. He has often to humour people's fancies in minor matters. After all, politics is the chief thing in life—at any rate for a newspaper; and if I want the people to follow me along the path of emancipation and progress, I mustn't scare them away. If they find a moral story like this down in the cellar,[1] they are all the more ready to take in what we tell them above—they feel themselves safer.

PETRA.

For shame! You're not such a hypocrite as to set traps like that for your readers. You're not a spider.

HOVSTAD.

[*Smiling.*] Thanks for your good opinion. It's true that the idea is Billing's, not mine.

PETRA.

Mr. Billing's!

HOVSTAD.

Yes, at least he was talking in that strain the other day. It was Billing that was so anxious to get the story into the paper; I don't even know the book.

[1] The reference is to the continental feuilleton at the foot of the page.

PETRA.

But how can Mr. Billing, with his advanced views——

HOVSTAD.

Well, Billing is many-sided. He's applying for the secretaryship to the Town Council, I hear.

PETRA.

I don't believe that, Mr. Hovstad. How could he descend to such a thing?

HOVSTAD.

That you must ask h i m.

PETRA.

I could never have thought it of Billing!

HOVSTAD.

[*Looking more closely at her.*] No? Is it such a surprise to you?

PETRA.

Yes. And yet—perhaps not. Oh, I don't know——

HOVSTAD.

We journalists are not worth much, Miss Petra.

PETRA.

Do you really say that?

HOVSTAD.

I think so, now and then.

PETRA.

Yes, in the little every-day squabbles—that I can understand. But now that you have taken up a great cause——

HOVSTAD.

You mean this affair of your father's?

PETRA.

Of course. I should think you must feel yourself worth more than the general run of people now.

HOVSTAD.

Yes, to-day I do feel something of the sort.

PETRA.

Yes, surely you must. Oh, it's a glorious career you have chosen! To be the pioneer of unrecognised truths and new and daring ways of thought!—even, if that were all, to stand forth fearlessly in support of an injured man——

HOVSTAD.

Especially when the injured man is—I hardly know how to put it——

PETRA.

You mean when he is so upright and true?

HOVSTAD.

[*In a low voice.*] I mean—especially when he is your father.

PETRA.

[*Suddenly taken aback.*] T h a t?

HOVSTAD.

Yes, Petra—Miss Petra.

PETRA.

So that is your chief thought, is it? Not the cause itself? Not the truth? Not father's great, warm heart?

HOVSTAD.

Oh, that too, of course.

PETRA.

No, thank you; you said too much that time, Mr. Hovstad. Now I shall never trust you again, in anything.

HOVSTAD.

Can you be so hard on me because it's mainly for your sake——?

PETRA.

What I blame you for is that you have not acted straightforwardly towards father. You have talked to him as if you cared only for the truth and the good of the community. You have trifled with both father and me. You are not the man you pretended to be. And that I will never forgive you—never.

HOVSTAD.

You shouldn't say that so bitterly, Miss Petra—least of all now.

PETRA.

Why not now?

HOVSTAD.

Because your father cannot do without my help.

PETRA.

[*Measuring him from head to foot.*] So you are capable of t h a t, too? Oh, shame!

HOVSTAD.

No, no. I spoke without thinking. You mustn't believe that of me.

PETRA.

I know what to believe. Good-bye.

ASLAKSEN *enters from printing-room, hurriedly and mysteriously.*

ASLAKSEN.

What do you think, Mr. Hovstad—[*Seeing* PETRA.] Ow, that's awkward——

PETRA.

Well, there is the book. You must give it to some one else. [*Going towards the main door.*

HOVSTAD.

[*Following her.*] But, Miss Petra——

PETRA.

Good-bye. [*She goes.*

ASLAKSEN.

I say, Mr. Hovstad!

HOVSTAD.

Well well; what is it?

ASLAKSEN.

The Burgomaster's out there, in the printing-office.

HOVSTAD.

The Burgomaster?

ASLAKSEN.

Yes. He wants to speak to you; he came in by the back way—he didn't want to be seen, you understand.

HOVSTAD.

What can be the meaning of this? Stop, I'll go myself——

[*Goes towards the printing-room, opens the door, bows and invites the* BURGOMASTER *to enter.*

HOVSTAD.

Keep a look-out, Aslaksen, that no one——

ASLAKSEN.

I understand. [*Goes into the printing-room.*

BURGOMASTER.

You didn't expect to see me here, Mr. Hovstad.

HOVSTAD.

No, I cannot say that I did.

BURGOMASTER.

[*Looking about him.*] You are very comfortably installed here—capital quarters.

HOVSTAD.

Oh——

BURGOMASTER.

And here have I come, without with your leave or by your leave, to take up your time——

HOVSTAD.

You are very welcome, Burgomaster; I am at your service. Let me take your cap and stick. [*He does so, and puts them on a chair.*] And won't you be seated?

BURGOMASTER.

[*Sitting down by the table.*] Thanks. [HOVSTAD *also sits by the table.*] I have been much—very much worried to-day, Mr. Hovstad.

HOVSTAD.

Really? Well, I suppose with all your various duties, Burgomaster——

BURGOMASTER.

It is the Doctor that has been causing me annoyance to-day.

HOVSTAD.

Indeed! The Doctor?

BURGOMASTER.

He has written a sort of memorandum to the Directors about some alleged shortcomings in the Baths.

HOVSTAD.

Has he really?

BURGOMASTER.

Yes; hasn't he told you? I thought he said——

HOVSTAD.

Oh yes, by-the-bye, he did mention something——

ASLAKSEN.

[*From the printing-office.*] I've just come for the manuscript——

HOVSTAD.

[*In a tone of vexation.*] Oh!—there it is on the desk.

ASLAKSEN.

[*Finding it.*] All right.

BURGOMASTER.

Why, t h a t is the very thing——

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, this is the Doctor's article, Burgomaster.

HOVSTAD.

Oh, is t h a t what you were speaking of?

BURGOMASTER.

Precisely. What do you think of it?

HOVSTAD.

I have no technical knowledge of the matter, and I've only glanced through it.

BURGOMASTER.

And yet you are going to print it!

HOVSTAD.

I can't very well refuse a signed communication——

ASLAKSEN.

I have nothing to do with the editing of the paper, Burgomaster——

BURGOMASTER.

Of course not.

ASLAKSEN.

I merely print what is placed in my hands.

BURGOMASTER.

Quite right, quite right.

ASLAKSEN.

So I must—— [*Goes towards the printing-room.*

BURGOMASTER.

No, stop a moment, Mr. Aslaksen. With your permission, Mr. Hovstad——

HOVSTAD.

By all means, Burgomaster.

BURGOMASTER.

You are a discreet and thoughtful man, Mr. Aslaksen.

ASLAKSEN.

I am glad you think so, Burgomaster.

BURGOMASTER.

And a man of very wide influence.

ASLAKSEN.

Well—chiefly among the lower middle-class.

BURGOMASTER.

The small taxpayers form the majority—here as everywhere.

ASLAKSEN.

That's very true.

BURGOMASTER.

And I have no doubt that you know the general feeling among them. Am I right?

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, I think I may say that I do, Burgomaster.

BURGOMASTER.

Well—since our townsfolk of the poorer class appear to be so heroically eager to make sacrifices——

ASLAKSEN.

How so?

HOVSTAD.

Sacrifices?

BURGOMASTER.

It is a pleasing evidence of public spirit—a most pleasing evidence. I admit it is more than I should quite have expected. But, of course, you know public feeling better than I do.

ASLAKSEN.

Yes but, Burgomaster——

BURGOMASTER.

And assuredly it is no small sacrifice the town will have to make.

HOVSTAD.

The town?

ASLAKSEN.

But I don't understand—— It's the Baths——

BURGOMASTER.

At a rough provisional estimate, the alterations the Doctor thinks desirable will come to two or three hundred thousand crowns.

ASLAKSEN.

That's a lot of money; but——

BURGOMASTER.

Of course we shall be obliged to raise a municipal loan.

HOVSTAD.

[*Rising.*] You surely can't mean that the town——?

ASLAKSEN.

Would you come upon the rates? Upon the scanty savings of the lower middle-class?

BURGOMASTER.

Why, my dear Mr. Aslaksen, where else are the funds to come from?

ASLAKSEN.

The proprietors of the Baths must see to that.

BURGOMASTER.

The proprietors are not in a position to go to any further expense.

ASLAKSEN.

Are you quite sure of that, Burgomaster?

BURGOMASTER.

I have positive information. So if these extensive alterations are called for, the town itself will have to bear the cost.

ASLAKSEN.

Oh, plague take it all—I beg your pardon!—but this is quite another matter, Mr. Hovstad.

HOVSTAD.

Yes, it certainly is.

BURGOMASTER.

The worst of it is, that we shall be obliged to close the establishment for a couple of years.

HOVSTAD.

To close it? Completely?

ASLAKSEN.

For two years!

BURGOMASTER.

Yes, the work will require that time—at least.

ASLAKSEN.

But, damn it all! we can't stand that, Burgomaster. What are we house-owners to live on in the meantime?

BURGOMASTER.

It's extremely difficult to say, Mr. Aslaksen. But what would you have us do? Do you think a single visitor will come here if we go about making them fancy that the water is poisoned, that the place is pestilential, that the whole town——

ASLAKSEN.

And it's all nothing but fancy?

BURGOMASTER.

With the best will in the world, I have failed to convince myself that it is anything else.

ASLAKSEN.

In that case it's simply inexcusable of Dr. Stockmann —I beg your pardon, Burgomaster, but——

BURGOMASTER.

I'm sorry to say you are only speaking the truth, Mr. Aslaksen. Unfortunately, my brother has always been noted for his rashness.

ASLAKSEN.

And yet you want to back him up in this, Mr. Hovstad!

HOVSTAD.

But who could possibly imagine that——?

BURGOMASTER.

I have drawn up a short statement of the facts, as they appear from a sober-minded standpoint; and I have intimated that any drawbacks that may possibly exist can no doubt be remedied by measures compatible with the finances of the Baths.

HOVSTAD.

Have you the article with you, Burgomaster?

BURGOMASTER.

[*Feeling in his pockets.*] Yes; I brought it with me, in case you——

ASLAKSEN.

[*Quickly.*] Plague take it, there he is!

BURGOMASTER.

Who? My brother?

HOVSTAD.

Where? where?

ASLAKSEN.

He's coming through the composing-room.

BURGOMASTER.

Most unfortunate! I don't want to meet him here, and yet there are several things I want to talk to you about.

HOVSTAD.

[*Pointing to the door on the right.*] Go in there for a moment.

BURGOMASTER.

But——?

HOVSTAD.

You'll find nobody but Billing there.

ASLAKSEN.

Quick, quick, Burgomaster; he's just coming.

BURGOMASTER.

Very well, then. But try to get rid of him quickly.

[*He goes out by the door on the right, which* ASLAKSEN *opens, and closes behind him.*

HOVSTAD.

Pretend to be busy, Aslaksen.

[*He sits down and writes.* ASLAKSEN *turns over a heap of newspapers on a chair, right.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Entering from the composing-room.*] Here I am, back again. [*Puts down his hat and stick.*

HOVSTAD.

[*Writing.*] Already, Doctor? Make haste with what we were speaking of, Aslaksen. We've no time to lose to-day.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*To* ASLAKSEN.] No proof yet, I hear.

ASLAKSEN.

[*Without turning round.*] No; how could you expect it?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Of course not; but you understand my impatience. I can have no rest or peace until I see the thing in print.

HOVSTAD.

H'm; it will take a good while yet. Don't you think so, Aslaksen?

ASLAKSEN.

I'm afraid it will.

DR. STOCKMANN.

All right, all right, my good friend; then I shall look in again. I'll look in twice if necessary. With so much at

stake—the welfare of the whole town—one mustn't grudge a little trouble. [*Is on the point of going but stops and comes back.*] Oh, by the way—there's one other thing I must speak to you about.

HOVSTAD.

Excuse me; wouldn't some other time——?

DR. STOCKMANN.

I can tell you in two words. You see it's this: when people read my article in the paper to-morrow, and find I have spent the whole winter working quietly for the good of the town——

HOVSTAD.

Yes but, Doctor——

DR. STOCKMANN.

I know what you're going to say. You don't think it was a bit more than my duty—my simple duty as a citizen. Of course I know that, as well as you do. But you see, my fellow townsmen—good Lord! the poor souls think so much of me——

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, the townspeople have hitherto thought very highly of you, Doctor.

DR. STOCKMANN.

That's exactly why I'm afraid that—. What I wanted to say was this: when all this comes to them—especially to the poorer classes—as a summons to take the affairs of the town into their own hands for the future——

HOVSTAD.

[*Rising.*] H'm, Doctor, I won't conceal from you——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Aha! I thought there was something brewing! But I won't hear of it. If they are getting up anything of that sort——

HOVSTAD.

Of what sort?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, anything of any sort—a procession with banners, or a banquet, or a subscription for a testimonial, or whatever it may be—you must give me your solemn promise to put a stop to it. And you too, Mr. Aslaksen; do you hear?

HOVSTAD.

Excuse me, Doctor; we may as well tell you the whole truth first as last——

MRS. STOCKMANN *enters from the back, left.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Seeing the* DOCTOR.] Ah! just as I thought!

HOVSTAD.

[*Going towards her.*] Mrs. Stockmann, too?

DR. STOCKMANN.

What the devil do y o u want here, Katrina?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

You know very well what I want.

HOVSTAD.

Won't you sit down? Or perhaps——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Thanks, please don't trouble. And you must forgive my following my husband here; remember, I am the mother of three children.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Stuff and nonsense! We all know that well enough.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Well, it doesn't look as if you thought very much about your wife and children to-day, or you wouldn't be so ready to plunge us all into ruin.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Are you quite mad, Katrina! Has a man with a wife and children no right to proclaim the truth? Has he no right to be an active and useful citizen? Has he no right to do his duty by the town he lives in?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Everything in moderation, Thomas!

ASLAKSEN.

That's just what I say. Moderation in everything.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

You are doing us a great wrong, Mr. Hovstad, in enticing my husband away from house and home, and befooling him in this way.

HOVSTAD.

I am not befooling any one——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Befooling! Do you think I should let myself be befooled?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Yes, that's just what you do. I know very well that you are the cleverest man in the town; but you're very easily made a fool of, Thomas. [*To* HOVSTAD.] Remember that he loses his post at the Baths if you print what he has written——

ASLAKSEN.

What!

HOVSTAD.

Well now, really, Doctor——

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Laughing.*] Ha ha! just let them try—! No no, my dear, they'll think twice about that. I have the compact majority behind me, you see!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

That's just the misfortune, that you should have such a horrid thing behind you.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Nonsense, Katrina;—you go home and look after your house, and let me take care of society. How can you be in such a fright when you see me so confident and happy? [*Rubbing his hands and walking up and down.*] Truth and the People must win the day; you may be perfectly sure of that. Oh! I can see all our free-souled citizens standing shoulder to shoulder like a conquering army——! [*Stopping by a chair.*] Why, what the devil is that?

ASLAKSEN.

[*Looking at it.*] Oh Lord!

HOVSTAD.

[*The same.*] H'm—

DR. STOCKMANN.

Why, here's the top-knot of authority!

[*He takes the* BURGOMASTER'S *official cap carefully between the tips of his fingers and holds it up.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

The Burgomaster's cap!

DR. STOCKMANN.

And here's the staff of office, too! But how in the devil's name did they——?

HOVSTAD.

Well then——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Ah, I understand! He has been here to talk you over. Ha, ha! He reckoned without his host that time! And when he caught sight of me in the printing-room—[*Bursts out laughing*]—he took to his heels, eh, Mr. Aslaksen?

ASLAKSEN.

[*Hurriedly.*] Exactly; he took to his heels, Doctor.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Made off without his stick and——. No, t h a t won't do! Peter never left anything behind him. But where the devil have you stowed him? Ah—in here, of course. Now you shall see, Katrina!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Thomas—I implore you——!

ASLAKSEN.

Take care, Doctor!

[DR. STOCKMANN *has put on the* BURGOMASTER'S *cap and grasped his stick; he now goes up to the door, throws it open, and makes a military salute.*

The BURGOMASTER *enters, red with anger. Behind him comes* BILLING.

BURGOMASTER.

What is the meaning of these antics?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Respect, my good Peter! Now, it's I that am in power in this town. [*He struts up and down.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Almost in tears.*] Oh, Thomas!

BURGOMASTER.

[*Following him.*] Give me my cap and stick!

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*As before.*] You may be Chief of Police, but I am Burgomaster. I am master of the whole town I tell you!

BURGOMASTER.

Put down my cap, I say. Remember it is an official cap, as by law prescribed!

DR. STOCKMANN.

Pshaw! Do you think the awakening lion of the democracy will let itself be scared by a gold-laced cap? There's to be a revolution in the town to-morrow, let me tell you. You threatened me with dismissal; but now *I* dismiss y o u —dismiss you from all your offices of trust—. You think I can't do it?—Oh, yes, I can! I have the irresistible forces of society on my side. Hovstad and Billing will thunder in the *People's Messenger*, and Aslaksen will take the field at the head of the House-owners' Association——

ASLAKSEN.

No, Doctor, I shall not.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Why, of course you will——

BURGOMASTER.

[illegible] Mr. Hovstad would like to join the agi[illegible]

HOVSTAD.

No, Burgomaster.

ASLAKSEN.

No, Mr. Hovstad isn't such a fool as to ruin both himself and the paper for the sake of a delusion.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[Looking about him.] What does all this mean?

HOVSTAD.

You have presented your case in a false light, Doctor; therefore I am unable to give you my support.

BILLING.

And after what the Burgomaster has been so kind as to explain to me, I——

DR. STOCKMANN.

In a false light! Well, I am responsible for that. Just write what you please, and I promise you I shall prove it up to the hilt.

HOVSTAD.

I shall not print it. I cannot, and will not, and dare not print it.

DR. STOCKMANN.

You dare not? What nonsense is this? You are editor, and surely it's the editor that controls a paper.

ASLAKSEN.

No, it's the subscribers, Doctor.

BURGOMASTER.

Fortunately.

ASLAKSEN.

It's public opinion, the enlightened majority, the house-owners and all the rest. It's t h e y who control a paper.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Calmly.*] And all these powers I have against me?

ASLAKSEN.

Yes, you have. It would mean absolute ruin for the town if your article were inserted.

DR. STOCKMANN.

So t h a t is the way of it!

BURGOMASTER.

My hat and stick!

[DR. STOCKMANN *takes off the cap and lays it on the table along with the stick.*

BURGOMASTER.

[*Taking them both.*] Your term of office has come to an untimely end.

DR. STOCKMANN.

The end is not yet. [*To* HOVSTAD.] So you are quite determined not to print my article in the *Messenger*?

HOVSTAD.

Quite; for the sake of your family, if for no other reason.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Oh, be kind enough to leave his family out of the question, Mr. Hovstad.

BURGOMASTER.

[*Takes a manuscript from his pocket.*] When this appears, the public will be in possession of all necessary information; it is an authentic statement. I place it in your hands.

HOVSTAD.

[*Taking the MS.*] Good. It shall appear in due course.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And not mine! You imagine you can kill me and the truth by a conspiracy of silence! But it won't be so easy as you think. Mr. Aslaksen, will you be good enough to print my article at once, as a pamphlet? I'll pay for it myself, and be my own publisher. I'll have four hundred copies—no, five—six hundred.

ASLAKSEN.

No. If you offered me its weight in gold, I dare not lend my press to such a purpose, Doctor. I daren't fly in the face of public opinion. You won't get it printed anywhere in the whole town.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Then give it me back.

HOVSTAD.

[*Handing him the MS.*] By all means.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Taking up his hat and cane.*] It shall be made public all the same. I shall read it at a great mass meeting; all my fellow citizens shall hear the voice of truth!

BURGOMASTER.

Not a single society in the town would let you their hall for such a purpose.

ASLAKSEN.

Not one, I'm quite certain.

BILLING.

No, strike me dead if they would!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

That would be too disgraceful! Why do they turn against you like this, every one of them?

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Irritated.*] I'll tell you why. It's because in this town all the men are old women—like you. They all think of nothing but their families, not of the general good.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Taking his arm.*] Then I'll show them that an—an old woman can be a man for once in a way. For now I'll stand by you, Thomas.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Bravely said, Katrina! I swear by my soul and conscience the truth shall out! If they won't let me a hall, I'll hire a drum and march through the town with it; and I'll read my paper at every street corner.

BURGOMASTER.

You can scarcely be such a raving lunatic as that?

DR. STOCKMANN.

I am.

ASLAKSEN.

You would not get a single man in the whole town to go with you.

BILLING.

No, strike me dead if you would!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Don't give in, Thomas. I'll ask the boys to go with you.

DR. STOCKMANN.

That's a splendid idea!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Morten will be delighted; and Eilif will go too, I daresay.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, and so will Petra! And you yourself, Katrina!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

No no, not I. But I'll stand at the window and watch you—that I will.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Throwing his arms about her and kissing her.*] Thank you for that! Now, my good sirs, we're ready for the fight! Now we shall see whether your despicable tactics can stop the mouth of the patriot who wants to purge society!

[*He and his wife go out together by the door in the back, left.*

BURGOMASTER.

[*Shaking his head dubiously.*] Now he has turned her head too!

ACT FOURTH

A large old-fashioned room in CAPTAIN HORSTER'S *house. An open folding-door in the background leads to an anteroom. In the wall on the left are three windows. About the middle of the opposite wall is a platform, and on it a small table, two candles, a water-bottle and glass, and a bell. For the rest, the room is lighted by sconces placed between the windows. In front, on the left, is a table with a candle on it, and by it a chair. In front, to the right, a door, and near it a few chairs.*

Large assemblage of all classes of townsfolk. In the crowd are a few women and schoolboys. More and more people gradually stream in from the back until the room is quite full.

FIRST CITIZEN.

[*To another standing near him.*] So you're here too, Lamstad?

SECOND CITIZEN.

I never miss a public meeting.

A BYSTANDER.

I suppose you've brought your whistle?

SECOND CITIZEN.

Of course I have; haven't you?

THIRD CITIZEN.

I should think so. And Skipper Evensen said he'd bring a thumping big horn.

SECOND CITIZEN.

He's a good 'un, is Evensen! [*Laughter in the group.*

A FOURTH CITIZEN.

[*Joining them.*] I say, what's it all about? What's going on here to-night?

SECOND CITIZEN.

Why, it's Dr. Stockmann that's going to lecture against the Burgomaster.

FOURTH CITIZEN.

But the Burgomaster's his brother.

FIRST CITIZEN.

That makes no difference. Dr. Stockmann's not afraid of him.

THIRD CITIZEN.

But he's all wrong; the *People's Messenger* says so.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Yes, he must be wrong this time; for neither the House-owners' Association nor the Citizens' Club would let him have a hall.

FIRST CITIZEN.

They wouldn't even lend him the hall at the Baths.

SECOND CITIZEN.

No, you may be sure they wouldn't.

A MAN.

In another group.] Now, who's the one to follow in this business, eh?

ANOTHER MAN.

In the same group.] Just keep your eye on Aslaksen, and do as he does.

BILLING.

With a portfolio under his arm, makes his way through the crowd. Excuse me, gentlemen. Will you allow me to pass? I'm here to report for the *People's Messenger*. Many thanks. [*Sits by the table on the left.*

A WORKING-MAN.

Who's he?

ANOTHER WORKING-MAN.

Don't you know him? It's that fellow Billing, that writes for Aslaksen's paper.

CAPTAIN HORSTER *enters by the door in front on the right, escorting* MRS. STOCKMANN *and* PETRA. EILIF *and* MORTEN *follow them.*

HORSTER.

This is where I thought you might sit; you can so easily slip out if anything should happen.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Do you think there will be any disturbance?

HORSTER.

One can never tell—with such a crowd. But there's no occasion for anxiety.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Sitting down.*] How kind it was of you to offer Stockmann this room.

HORSTER.

Since no one else would, I——

PETRA.

[*Who has also seated herself.*] And it was brave too, Captain Horster.

HORSTER.

Oh, I don't see where the bravery comes in.

HOVSTAD *and* ASLAKSEN *enter at the same moment, but make their way through the crowd separately.*

ASLAKSEN.

[*Going up to* HORSTER.] Hasn't the Doctor come yet?

HORSTER.

He's waiting in there.

[*A movement at the door in the background.*

HOVSTAD.

[*To* BILLING.] There's the Burgomaster! Look!

BILLING.

Yes, strike me dead if he hasn't put in an appearance after all!

BURGOMASTER STOCKMANN *makes his way blandly through the meeting, bowing politely to both sides, and takes his stand by the wall on the left. Soon afterwards,* DR. STOCKMANN *enters by the door on the right. He wears a black frockcoat and white necktie. Faint applause, met by a subdued hissing. Then silence.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*In a low tone.*] How do you feel, Katrina?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Quite comfortable, thank you. [*In a low voice.*] Now do keep your temper, Thomas.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh, I shall keep myself well in hand. [*Looks at his watch, ascends the platform, and bows.*] It's a quarter past the hour, so I shall begin—— [*Takes out his MS.*

ASLAKSEN.

But surely a chairman must be elected first.

DR. STOCKMANN.

No, that's not at all necessary.

SEVERAL GENTLEMEN.

[*Shouting.*] Yes, yes.

BURGOMASTER.

I should certainly say that a chairman ought to be elected.

DR. STOCKMANN.

But I've called this meeting to give a lecture, Peter!

BURGOMASTER.

Dr. Stockmann's lecture may possibly lead to differences of opinion.

SEVERAL VOICES IN THE CROWD.

A chairman! A chairman!

HOVSTAD.

The general voice of the meeting seems to be for a chairman!

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Controlling himself.*] Very well then; let the meeting have its way.

ASLAKSEN.

Will not the Burgomaster take the chair?

THREE GENTLEMEN.

[*Clapping.*] Bravo! Bravo!

BURGOMASTER.

For reasons you will easily understand, I must decline. But, fortunately, we have among us one whom I think we

can all accept. I allude to the president of the House-owners' Association, Mr. Aslaksen.

MANY VOICES.

Yes, yes! Bravo Aslaksen! Hurrah for Aslaksen!

[DR. STOCKMANN *takes his MS. and descends from the platform.*

ASLAKSEN.

Since my fellow citizens repose this trust in me, I cannot refuse——

[*Applause and cheers.* ASLAKSEN *ascends the platform.*

BILLING.

[*Writing.*] So—"Mr. Aslaksen was elected by acclamation——"

ASLAKSEN.

And now, as I have been called to the chair, I take the liberty of saying a few brief words. I am a quiet, peace-loving man; I am in favour of discreet moderation, and of—and of moderate discretion. Every one who knows me, knows that.

MANY VOICES.

Yes, yes, Aslaksen!

ASLAKSEN.

I have learnt in the school of life and of experience that moderation is the virtue in which the individual citizen finds his best advantage——

BURGOMASTER.

Hear, hear!

ASLAKSEN.

——and it is discretion and moderation, too, that best serve the community. I could therefore suggest to our respected fellow citizen, who has called this meeting, that he should endeavour to keep within the bounds of moderation.

A MAN.

[*By the door.*] Three cheers for the Temperance Society!

A VOICE.

Go to the devil!

VOICES.

Hush! hush!

ASLAKSEN.

No interruptions, gentlemen!—Does any one wish to offer any observations?

BURGOMASTER.

Mr. Chairman!

ASLAKSEN.

Burgomaster Stockmann will address the meeting.

BURGOMASTER.

On account of my close relationship—of which you are probably aware—to the present medical officer of the Baths, I should have preferred not to speak here this evening. But my position as chairman of the Baths,

and my care for the vital interests of this town, force me to move a resolution. I may doubtless assume that not a single citizen here present thinks it desirable that untrustworthy and exaggerated statements should get abroad as to the sanitary condition of the Baths and of our town.

MANY VOICES.

No, no, no! Certainly not! We protest!

BURGOMASTER.

I therefore beg to move, "That this meeting declines to hear the proposed lecture or speech on the subject by the medical officer of the Baths."

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Flaring up.*] Declines to hear——! What do you mean?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Coughing.*] H'm! h'm!

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Controlling himself.*] So I am not to be heard?

BURGOMASTER.

In my statement in the *People's Messenger* I have made the public acquainted with the essential facts, so that all well-disposed citizens can easily form their own judgment. From that statement it will be seen that the medical officer's proposal—besides amounting to a vote of censure upon the leading men of the town—at bottom

only means saddling the ratepayers with an unnecessary outlay of at least a hundred thousand crowns.

[*Sounds of protest and some hissing.*

ASLAKSEN.

[*Ringing the bell.*] Order, gentlemen! I must beg leave to support the Burgomaster's resolution. I quite agree with him that there is something beneath the surface of the Doctor's agitation. In all his talk about the Baths, it is really a revolution he is aiming at; he wants to effect a redistribution of power. No one doubts the excellence of Dr. Stockmann's intentions—of course there cannot be two opinions as to that. I, too, am in favour of self-government by the people, if only it doesn't cost the ratepayers too much. But in this case it would do so; and therefore I'll be hanged if—excuse me—in short, I cannot go with Dr. Stockmann upon this occasion. You can buy even gold too dear; that's my opinion.

[*Loud applause on all sides.*

HOVSTAD.

I, too feel bound to explain my attitude. Dr. Stockmann's agitation seemed at first to find favour in several quarters, and I supported it as impartially as I could. But it presently appeared that we had been misled by a false representation of the facts——

DR. STOCKMANN.

False——!

HOVSTAD.

Well then, an untrustworthy representation. This the Burgomaster's report has proved. I trust no one here

present doubts my liberal principles; the attitude of the *Messenger* on all great political questions is well known to you all. But I have learned from men of judgment and experience that in purely local matters a paper must observe a certain amount of caution.

ASLAKSEN.

I entirely agree with the speaker.

HOVSTAD.

And in the matter under discussion it is quite evident that Dr. Stockmann has public opinion against him. But, gentlemen, what is an editor's clearest and most imperative duty? Is it not to work in harmony with his readers? Has he not in some sort received a tacit mandate to further assiduously and unweariedly the interests of his constituents? Or am I mistaken in this?

MANY VOICES.

No, no, no! Hovstad is right!

HOVSTAD.

It has cost me a bitter struggle to break with a man in whose house I have of late been a frequent guest—with a man who, up to this day, has enjoyed the unqualified goodwill of his fellow citizens—with a man whose only, or, at any rate, whose chief fault is that he consults his heart rather than his head.

A FEW SCATTERED VOICES.

That's true! Hurrah for Dr. Stockmann!

HOVSTAD.

But my duty towards the community has constrained me to break with him. Then, too, there is another consideration that impels me to oppose him, and, if possible, to block the ill-omened path upon which he is entering: consideration for his family——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Keep to the water-works and sewers!

HOVSTAD.

——consideration for his wife and his unprotected[1] children.

MORTEN.

Is that us, mother?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Hush!

ASLAKSEN.

I will now put the Burgomaster's resolution to the vote.

DR. STOCKMANN.

You need not. I have no intention of saying anything this evening of all the filth at the Baths. No! You shall hear something quite different.

BURGOMASTER.

[*Half aloud.*] What next, I wonder?

[1] Literally, "unprovided-for."

A DRUNKEN MAN.

[*At the main entrance.*] I'm a ratepayer, so I've a right to my opinion! And it's my full, firm, incomprehensible opinion that——

SEVERAL VOICES.

Silence up there!

OTHERS.

He's drunk! Turn him out!

[*The drunken man is turned out.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Can I speak?

ASLAKSEN.

[*Ringing the bell.*] Dr. Stockmann will address the meeting.

DR. STOCKMANN.

A few days ago, I should have liked to see any one venture upon such an attempt to gag me as has been made here to-night! I would have fought like a lion for my sacred rights! But now I care little enough; for now I have more important things to speak of.

[*The people crowd closer round him.* MORTEN KIIL *comes in sight among the bystanders.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Continuing.*] I have been pondering a great many things during these last days—thinking such a multitude of thoughts, that at last my head was positively in a whirl——

BURGOMASTER.

[*Coughing.*] H'm——!

DR. STOCKMANN.

But presently things seemed to straighten themselves out, and I saw them clearly in all their bearings. That is why I stand here this evening. I am about to make great revelations, my fellow citizens! I am going to announce to you a far-reaching discovery, beside which the trifling fact that our water-works are poisoned, and that our health-resort is built on pestilential ground, sinks into insignificance.

MANY VOICES.

[*Shouting.*] Don't speak about the Baths! We won't listen to that! No more of that!

DR. STOCKMANN.

I have said I would speak of the great discovery I have made within the last few days—the discovery that all our sources of spiritual life are poisoned, and that our whole society rests upon a pestilential basis of falsehood.

SEVERAL VOICES.

[*In astonishment and half aloud.*] What's he saying?

BURGOMASTER.

Such an insinuation——!

ASLAKSEN.

[*With his hand on the bell.*] I must call upon the speaker to moderate his expressions.

DR. STOCKMANN.

I have loved my native town as dearly as any man can love the home of his childhood. I was young when I left our town, and distance, homesickness and memory threw, as it were, a glamour over the place and its people.

[*Some applause and cries of approval.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Then for years I was imprisoned in a horrible hole, far away in the north. As I went about among the people scattered here and there over the stony wilderness, it seemed to me, many a time, that it would have been better for these poor famishing creatures to have had a cattle-doctor to attend them, instead of a man like me.

[*Murmurs in the room.*

BILLING.

[*Laying down his pen.*] Strike me dead if I've ever heard——!

HOVSTAD.

What an insult to an estimable peasantry!

DR. STOCKMANN.

Wait a moment!—I don't think any one can reproach me with forgetting my native town up there. I sat brooding like an eider duck, and what I hatched was—the plan of the Baths.

[*Applause and expressions of dissent.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

And when, at last, fate ordered things so happily that I could come home again—then, fellow citizens, it seemed

to me that I hadn't another desire in the world. Yes, one desire I had: an eager, constant, burning desire to be of service to my birthplace, and to its people.

BURGOMASTER.

[*Gazing into vacancy.*] A strange method to select——!

DR. STOCKMANN.

So I went about revelling in my happy illusions. But yesterday morning—no, it was really two nights ago—my mind's eyes were opened wide, and the first thing I saw was the colossal stupidity of the authorities——

[*Noise, cries, and laughter.* MRS. STOCKMANN *coughs repeatedly.*

BURGOMASTER.

Mr. Chairman!

ASLAKSEN.

[*Ringing his bell.*] In virtue of my position——!

DR. STOCKMANN.

It's petty to catch me up on a word, Mr. Aslaksen! I only mean that I became alive to the extraordinary muddle our leading men had been guilty of, down at the Baths. I cannot for the life of me abide leading men —I've seen enough of them in my time. They are like goats in a young plantation: they do harm at every point; they block the path of a free man wherever he turns—and I should be glad if we could exterminate them like other noxious animals—— [*Uproar in the room.*

BURGOMASTER.

Mr. Chairman, are such expressions permissible?

ASLAKSEN.

[*With his hand on the bell.*] Dr. Stockmann——

DR. STOCKMANN.

I can't conceive how it is that I have only now seen through these gentry; for haven't I had a magnificent example before my eyes here every day—my brother Peter—slow of understanding, tenacious in prejudice——

[*Laughter, noise, and whistling.* MRS. STOCKMANN *coughs.* ASLAKSEN *rings violently.*

THE DRUNKEN MAN.

[*Who has come in again.*] Is it me you're alluding to? Sure enough, my name's Petersen; but devil take me if——

ANGRY VOICES.

Out with that drunken man! Turn him out!

[*The man is again turned out.*

BURGOMASTER.

Who is that person?

A BYSTANDER.

I don't know him, Burgomaster.

ANOTHER.

He doesn't belong to the town.

A THIRD.

I believe he's a timber-dealer from——

[*The rest is inaudible.*

ASLAKSEN.

The man was evidently intoxicated.—Continue, Dr. Stockmann; but pray endeavour to be moderate.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, fellow citizens, I shall say no more about our leading men. If any one imagines, from what I have just said, that it's these gentlemen I want to make short work of to-night, he is mistaken—altogether mistaken. For I cherish the comfortable conviction that these laggards, these relics of a decaying order of thought, are diligently cutting their own throats. They need no doctor to hasten their end. And it is not people of t h a t sort that constitute the real danger to society; it is not they who are most active in poisoning the sources of our spiritual life and making a plague-spot of the ground beneath our feet; it is not t h e y who are the most dangerous enemies of truth and freedom in our society.

CRIES FROM ALL SIDES.

Who, then? Who is it? Name, name!

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, you may be sure I shall name them! For t h i s is the great discovery I made yesterday: [*In a louder tone.*] The most dangerous foe to truth and freedom in our midst is the compact majority. Yes, it's the confounded, compact, liberal majority—that, and nothing else! There, I've told you.

[*Immense disturbance in the room. Most of the audience are shouting, stamping, and whistling. Several elderly gentlemen exchange furtive glances*

and seem to be enjoying the scene. MRS. STOCKMANN *rises in alarm.* EILIF *and* MORTEN *advance threateningly towards the schoolboys, who are making noises.* ASLAKSEN *rings the bell and calls for order.* HOVSTAD *and* BILLING *both speak, but nothing can be heard. At last quiet is restored.*

ASLAKSEN.

I must request the speaker to withdraw his ill-considered expressions.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Never, Mr. Aslaksen! For it's this very majority that robs me of my freedom, and wants to forbid me to speak the truth.

HOVSTAD.

The majority always has right on its side.

BILLING.

Yes, and truth too, strike me dead!

DR. STOCKMANN.

The majority never has right on its side. Never I say! That is one of the social lies that a free, thinking man is bound to rebel against. Who make up the majority in any given country? Is it the wise men or the fools? I think we must agree that the fools are in a terrible, overwhelming majority, all the wide world over But how in the devil's name can it ever be right for the fools to rule over the wise men? [*Uproar and yells.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, yes, you can shout me down, but you cannot gainsay me. The majority has m i g h t —unhappily—but r i g h t it has not. It is I, and the few, the individuals, that are in the right. The minority is always right.

[*Renewed uproar.*

HOVSTAD.

Ha ha! Dr. Stockmann has turned aristocrat since the day before yesterday!

DR. STOCKMANN.

I have said that I have no words to waste on the little, narrow-chested, short-winded crew that lie in our wake. Pulsating life has nothing more to do with them. I am speaking of the few, the individuals among us, who have made all the new, germinating truths their own. These men stand, as it were, at the outposts, so far in the van that the compact majority has not yet reached them—and t h e r e they fight for truths that are too lately born into the world's consciousness to have won over the majority.

HOVSTAD.

So the Doctor's a revolutionist now!

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, by Heaven, I am, Mr. Hovstad! I am going to revolt against the lie that truth belongs exclusively to the majority. What sort of truths do the majority rally round? Truths so stricken in years that they are sinking into decrepitude. When a truth is so old as that, gentlemen, it's in a fair way to become a lie.

[*Laughter and jeers.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, yes, you may believe me or not, as you please; but truths are by no means the wiry Methusalehs some people think them. A normally-constituted truth lives—let us say—as a rule, seventeen or eighteen years; at the outside twenty; very seldom more. And truths so patriarchal as that are always shockingly emaciated; yet it's not till then that the majority takes them up and recommends them to society as wholesome food. I can assure you there's not much nutriment in that sort of fare; you may take my word as a doctor for that. All these majority-truths are like last year's salt pork; they're like rancid, mouldy ham, producing all the moral scurvy that devastates society.

ASLAKSEN.

It seems to me that the honourable speaker is wandering rather far from the subject.

BURGOMASTER.

I beg to endorse the Chairman's remark.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Why you're surely mad, Peter! I'm keeping as closely to my text as I possibly can; for my text is precisely this —that the masses, the majority, this devil's own compact majority—it's that, I say, that's poisoning the sources of our spiritual life, and making a plague-spot of the ground beneath our feet.

HOVSTAD.

And you make this charge against the great, independent majority, just because they have the sense to accept only certain and acknowledged truths?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Ah, my dear Mr. Hovstad, don't talk about certain truths! The truths acknowledged by the masses, the multitude, were certain truths to the vanguard in our grandfathers' days. We, the vanguard of to-day, don't acknowledge them any longer; and I don't believe there exists any other certain truth but this—that no society can live a healthy life upon truths so old and marrowless.

HOVSTAD.

But instead of all this vague talk, suppose you were to give us some specimens of these old marrowless truths that we are living upon.

[*Approval from several quarters.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh, I could give you no end of samples from the rubbish-heap; but, for the present, I shall keep to one acknowledged truth, which is a hideous lie at bottom, but which Mr. Hovstad, and the *Messenger*, and all adherents of the *Messenger*, live on all the same.

HOVSTAD.

And that is——?

DR. STOCKMANN.

That is the doctrine you have inherited from your forefathers, and go on thoughtlessly proclaiming far and wide—the doctrine that the multitude, the vulgar herd, the masses, are the pith of the people—that they a r e the people—that the common man, the ignorant, undeveloped member of society, has the same right to sanction

and to condemn, to counsel and to govern, as the intellectually distinguished few.

BILLING.

Well, now, strike me dead——!

HOVSTAD.

[*Shouting at the same time.*] Citizens, please note this!

ANGRY VOICES.

Ho-ho! Aren't we the people? Is it only the grand folks that are to govern?

A WORKING MAN.

Out with the fellow that talks like that!

OTHERS.

Turn him out!

A CITIZEN.

[*Shouting.*] Blow your horn, Evensen.

[*The deep notes of a horn are heard; whistling, and terrific noise in the room.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*When the noise has somewhat subsided.*] Now do be reasonable! Can't you bear even for once in a way to hear the voice of truth? I don't ask you all to agree with me on the instant. But I certainly should have expected Mr. Hovstad to back me up, as soon as he had collected himself a bit. Mr. Hovstad sets up to be a free-thinker——

SEVERAL VOICES.

[*Subdued and wondering.*] Freethinker, did he say? What? Mr. Hovstad a freethinker?

HOVSTAD.

[*Shouting.*] Prove it, Dr. Stockmann. When have I said so in print?

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Reflecting.*] No, upon my soul, you're right there; you've never had the frankness to do that. Well, well, I won't put you on the rack, Mr. Hovstad. Let me be the freethinker then. And now I'll make it clear to you all, and on scientific grounds too, that the *Messenger* is leading you shamefully by the nose, when it tells you that you, the masses, the crowd, are the true pith of the people. I tell you that's only a newspaper lie. The masses are nothing but the raw material that must be fashioned into a People.

[*Murmurs, laughter, and disturbance in the room.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Is it not so with all other living creatures? What a difference between a cultivated and an uncultivated breed of animals! Just look at a common barn-door hen. What meat do you get from such a skinny carcase? Not much, I can tell you! And what sort of eggs does she lay? A decent crow or raven can lay nearly as good. Then take a cultivated Spanish or Japanese hen, or take a fine pheasant or turkey—ah! then you'll see the difference! And now look at the dog, our near relation. Think first of an ordinary vulgar cur—I mean one of those wretched, ragged, plebeian mongrels that

haunt the gutters, and soil the sidewalks. Then place such a mongrel by the side of a poodle-dog, descended through many generations from an aristocratic stock, who have lived on delicate food, and heard harmonious voices and music. Do you think the brain of the poodle isn't very differently developed from that of the mongrel? Yes, you may be sure it is! It's well-bred poodle-pups like this that jugglers train to perform the most marvellous tricks. A common peasant-cur could never learn anything of the sort—not if he tried till doomsday.

[*Noise and laughter are heard all round.*

A CITIZEN.

[*Shouting.*] Do you want to make dogs of us now?

ANOTHER MAN.

We're not animals, Doctor!

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, on my soul, but we a r e animals, my good sir! We're one and all of us animals, whether we like it or not. But truly there are few enough aristocratic animals among us. Oh, there's a terrible difference between poodle-men and mongrel-men! And the ridiculous part of it is, that Mr. Hovstad quite agrees with me so long as it's four-legged animals we're talking of——

HOVSTAD.

Oh, beasts are only beasts.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well and good—but no sooner do I apply the law to two-legged animals, than Mr. Hovstad stops short; then

he daren't hold his own opinions, or think out his own thoughts; then he turns the whole principle upside down, and proclaims in the *People's Messenger* that the barn-door hen and the gutter-mongrel are precisely the finest specimens in the menagerie. But that's always the way, so long as the commonness still lingers in your system, and you haven't worked your way up to spiritual distinction.

HOVSTAD.

I make no pretence to any sort of distinction. I come of simple peasant folk, and I am proud that my root should lie deep down among the common people, who are here being insulted.

WORKMEN.

Hurrah for Hovstad. Hurrah! hurrah!

DR. STOCKMANN.

The sort of common people I am speaking of are not found among the lower classes alone; they crawl and swarm all around us—up to the very summits of society. Just look at your own smug, respectable Burgomaster! Why, my brother Peter belongs as clearly to the common people as any man that walks on two legs——

[*Laughter and hisses.*

BURGOMASTER.

I protest against such personalities.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Imperturbably.*] ——and that not because, like myself, he's descended from a good-for-nothing old pirate

from Pomerania, or thereabouts—for that's our ancestry——

BURGOMASTER.

An absurd tradition! Utterly groundless.

DR. STOCKMANN.

——but he is so because he thinks the thoughts and holds the opinions of his official superiors. Men who do that, belong, intellectually-speaking, to the common people; and that is why my distinguished brother Peter is at bottom so undistinguished,—and consequently so illiberal.

BURGOMASTER.

Mr. Chairman——!

HOVSTAD.

So that the distinguished people in this country are the Liberals? That's quite a new light on the subject. [*Laughter.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, that is part of my new discovery. And this, too, follows: that liberality of thought is almost precisely the same thing as morality. Therefore I say it's absolutely unpardonable of the *Messenger* to proclaim, day out, day in, the false doctrine that it's the masses, the multitude, the compact majority, that monopolise liberality and morality,—and that vice and corruption and all sorts of spiritual uncleanness ooze out of culture, as all that filth oozes down to the Baths from the Mill Dale tanworks! [*Noise and interruptions.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Goes on imperturbably, smiling in his eagerness.*] And yet this same *Messenger* can preach about elevating the masses and the multitude to a higher level of well-being! Why, deuce take it, if the *Messenger's* own doctrine holds good, the elevation of the masses would simply mean hurling them straight to perdition! But, happily, the notion that culture demoralises is nothing but an old traditional lie. No it's stupidity, poverty, the ugliness of life, that do the devil's work! In a house that isn't aired and swept every day—my wife maintains that the floors ought to be scrubbed too, but perhaps that is going too far;—well,—in such a house, I say, within two or three years, people lose the power of thinking or acting morally. Lack of oxygen enervates the conscience. And there seems to be precious little oxygen in many and many a house in this town, since the whole compact majority is unscrupulous enough to want to found its future upon a quagmire of lies and fraud.

ASLAKSEN.

I cannot allow so gross an insult to be levelled against a whole community.

A GENTLEMAN.

I move that the Chairman order the speaker to sit down.

EAGER VOICES.

Yes, yes! That's right! Sit down! Sit down!

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Flaring up.*] Then I shall proclaim the truth at every street corner! I shall write to newspapers in other

towns! The whole country shall know how matters stand here!

HOVSTAD.

It almost seems as if the Doctor's object were to ruin the town.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, so well do I love my native town that I would rather ruin it than see it flourishing upon a lie.

ASLAKSEN.

That's plain speaking.

[*Noise and whistling.* MRS. STOCKMANN *coughs in vain; the* DOCTOR *no longer heeds her.*

HOVSTAD.

[*Shouting amid the tumult.*] The man who would ruin a whole community must be an enemy to his fellow citizens!

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*With growing excitement.*] What does it matter if a lying community is ruined! Let it be levelled to the ground, say I! All men who live upon a lie ought to be exterminated like vermin! You'll end by poisoning the whole country; you'll bring it to such a pass that the whole country will deserve to perish. And if ever it comes to that, I shall say, from the bottom of my heart: Perish the country! Perish all its people!

A MAN.

[*In the crowd.*] Why, he talks like a regular enemy of the people!

BILLING.

Strike me dead but there spoke the people's voice!

THE WHOLE ASSEMBLY.

[*Shouting.*] Yes! yes! yes! He's an enemy of the people! He hates his country! He hates the whole people!

ASLAKSEN.

Both as a citizen of this town and as a human being, I am deeply shocked at what it has been my lot to hear to-night. Dr. Stockmann has unmasked himself in a manner I should never have dreamt of. I must reluctantly subscribe to the opinion just expressed by some estimable citizens; and I think we ought to formulate this opinion in a resolution. I therefore beg to move, "That this meeting declares the medical officer of the Baths, Dr. Thomas Stockmann, to be an enemy of the people."

[*Thunders of applause and cheers. Many form a circle round the* DOCTOR *and hoot at him.* MRS. STOCKMANN *and* PETRA *have risen.* MORTEN *and* EILIF *fight the other schoolboys, who have also been hooting. Some grown-up persons separate them.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*To the people hooting.*] Ah, fools that you are! I tell you that——

ASLAKSEN.

[*Ringing.*] The Doctor is out of order in speaking. A formal vote must be taken; but out of consideration for personal feelings, it will be taken in writing and without names. Have you any blank paper, Mr. Billing?

BILLING.

Here's both blue and white paper——

ASLAKSEN.

Capital; that will save time. Cut it up into slips. That's it. [*To the meeting.*] Blue means no, white means aye. I myself will go round and collect the votes.

[*The* BURGOMASTER *leaves the room.* ASLAKSEN *and a few others go round with pieces of paper in hats.*

A GENTLEMAN.

[*To* HOVSTAD.] What can be the matter with the Doctor? What does it all mean?

HOVSTAD.

Why, you know what a hare-brained creature he is.

ANOTHER GENTLEMAN.

[*To* BILLING.] I say, you're often at his house. Have you ever noticed if the fellow drinks?

BILLING

Strike me dead if I know what to say. The toddy's always on the table when any one looks in.

A THIRD GENTLEMAN.

No, I should rather say he went off his head at times.

FIRST GENTLEMAN.

I wonder if there's madness in the family?

BILLING.

I shouldn't be surprised.

A FOURTH GENTLEMAN.

No, it's pure malice. He wants to be revenged for something or other.

BILLING.

He was certainly talking about a rise in his salary the other day; but he didn't get it.

ALL THE GENTLEMEN.

[*Together.*] Aha! That explains everything.

THE DRUNKEN MAN.

[*In the crowd.*] I want a blue one, I do! And I'll have a white one too.

SEVERAL PEOPLE.

There's the tipsy man again! Turn him out.

MORTEN KIIL.

[*Approaching the* DOCTOR.] Well, Stockmann, you see now what such monkey-tricks lead to?

DR. STOCKMANN.

I have done my duty.

MORTEN KIIL.

What was that you said about the Mill Dale tanneries?

DR. STOCKMANN.

You heard what I said—that all the filth comes from them.

MORTEN KIIL.

From my tannery as well?

DR. STOCKMANN.

I'm sorry to say yours is the worst of all.

MORTEN KIIL.

Are you going to put t h a t in the papers, too?

DR. STOCKMANN.

I can't gloze anything over.

MORTEN KIIL.

This may cost you dear, Stockmann! [*He goes out.*

A FAT GENTLEMAN.

[*Goes up to* HORSTER, *without bowing to the ladies.*] Well, Captain, so you lend your house to enemies of the people.

HORSTER.

I suppose I can do as I please with my own property, Sir.

THE GENTLEMAN.

Then of course you can have no objection if I follow your example?

HORSTER.

What do you mean, Sir?

THE GENTLEMAN.

You shall hear from me to-morrow.

[*Turns away and goes out.*

PETRA.

Wasn't that the owner of your ship, Captain Horster?

HORSTER.

Yes, that was Mr. Vik.

ASLAKSEN.

[*With the voting papers in his hands, ascends the platform and rings.*] Gentlemen! I have now to announce the result of the vote. All the voters, with one exception——

A YOUNG GENTLEMAN.

That's the tipsy man!

ASLAKSEN.

With the exception of one intoxicated person, this meeting of citizens unanimously declares the medical officer of the Baths, Dr. Thomas Stockmann, to be an enemy of the people. [*Cheers and applause.*] Three cheers for our fine old municipality! [*Cheers.*] Three cheers for our able and energetic Burgomaster, who has so loyally set family prejudice aside! [*Cheers.*] The meeting is dissolved. [*He descends.*

BILLING.

Three cheers for the Chairman!

ALL.

Hurrah for Aslaksen!

DR. STOCKMANN.

My hat and coat, Petra. Captain, have you room for passengers to the new world?

HORSTER.

For you and yours, Doctor, we'll make room.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*While* PETRA *helps him to put on his coat.*] Good. Come Katrina, come boys!

[*He gives his wife his arm.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*In a low voice.*] Thomas, dear, let us go out by the back way.

DR. STOCKMANN.

No back ways, Katrina! [*In a loud voice.*] You shall hear from the enemy of the people, before he shakes the dust from his feet! I am not so forbearing as a certain person; I don't say: I forgive you, for you know not what you do.

ASLAKSEN.

[*Shouts.*] That is a blasphemous comparison, Dr. Stockmann!

BILLING.

Strike me——! This is more than a serious man can stand!

A COARSE VOICE.

And he threatens us into the bargain!

ANGRY CRIES.

Let's smash his windows! Duck him in the fiord!

A MAN.

[*In the crowd.*] Blow your horn, Evensen! Blow, man, blow!

[*Horn-blowing, whistling, and wild shouting. The* DOCTOR, *with his family, goes towards the door.* HORSTER *clears the way for them.*

ALL.

[*Yelling after them as they go out.*] Enemy of the people! Enemy of the people! Enemy of the people!

BILLING.

Strike me dead if I'd care to drink toddy at Stockmann's to-night!

[*The people throng towards the door; the shouting is taken up by others outside; from the street are heard cries of "Enemy of the people! Enemy of the people!"*

ACT FIFTH

DR. STOCKMANN'S *Study. Bookshelves and glass cases with various collections along the walls. In the back, a door leading to the hall; in front, on the left, a door to the sitting-room. In the wall to the right are two windows, all the panes of which are smashed. In the middle of the room is the* DOCTOR'S *writing-table, covered with books and papers. The room is in disorder. It is forenoon.*

DR. STOCKMANN, *in dressing-gown, slippers, and skull-cap, is bending down and raking with an umbrella under one of the cabinets; at last he rakes out a stone.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Speaking through the sitting-room doorway.*] Katrina, I've found another!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*In the sitting-room.*] Oh, I'm sure you'll find plenty more.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Placing the stone on a pile of others on the table.*] I shall keep these stones as sacred relics. Eilif and Morten shall see them every day, and when I die they shall be heirlooms. [*Raking under the bookcase.*] Hasn't—what the devil is her name?—the girl—hasn't she been for the glazier yet?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Coming in.*] Yes, but he said he didn't know whether he would be able to come to-day.

DR. STOCKMANN.

I believe, if the truth were told, he daren't come.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Well, Randina, too, had an idea he was afraid to come, because of the neighbours. [*Speaks through the sitting-room doorway.*] What is it, Randina?—Very well. [*Goes out, and returns immediately.*] Here is a letter for you, Thomas.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Let me see. [*Opens the letter and reads.*] Aha!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Who is it from?

DR. STOCKMANN.

From the landlord. He gives us notice.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Is it possible? He is such a nice man——

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Looking at the letter.*] He daren't do otherwise, he says. He is very unwilling to do it; but he daren't do otherwise—on account of his fellow citizens—out of respect for public opinion—is in a dependent position—doesn't dare to offend certain influential men——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

There, you see, Thomas.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, yes, I see well enough; they are all cowards, every one of them, in this town; no one dares do anything for fear of all the rest. [*Throws the letter on the table.*] But it's all the same to us, Katrina. We will shape our course for the new world, and then——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

But are you sure this idea of going abroad is altogether wise, Thomas?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Would you have me stay here, where they have pilloried me as an enemy of the people, branded me, smashed my windows! And look here, Katrina, they've torn a hole in my black trousers, too.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Oh dear; and these are the best you have!

DR. STOCKMANN.

A man should never put on his best trousers when he goes out to battle for freedom and truth. Well, I don't care so much about the trousers; them you can always patch up for me. But that the mob, the rabble, should dare to attack me as if they were my equals—t h a t is what I can't, for the life of me, stomach!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Yes, they have behaved abominably to you here, Thomas; but is that any reason for leaving the country altogether?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Do you think the plebeians aren't just as insolent in other towns? Oh yes, they are, my dear; it's six of one and half a dozen of the other. Well, never mind; let the curs yelp; t h a t ' s not the worst; the worst is that every one, all over the country, is the slave of his party. Not that I suppose—very likely it's no better in the free West either; the compact majority, and enlightened public opinion, and all the other devil's trash is rampant there too. But you see the conditions are larger there than here; they may kill you, but they don't slow-torture you; they don't screw up a free soul in a vice, as they do at home here. And then, if need be, you can keep out of it all. [*Walks up and down.*] If I only knew of any primeval forest, or a little South Sea island to be sold cheap——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Yes, but the boys, Thomas.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Comes to a standstill.*] What an extraordinary woman you are, Katrina! Would you rather have the boys grow up in such a society as ours? Why, you could see for yourself yesterday evening that one half of the population is stark mad, and if the other half hasn't lost its wits, that's only because they are brute beasts who haven't any wits to lose.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

But really, my dear Thomas, you do say such imprudent things.

DR. STOCKMANN.

What! Isn't it the truth that I tell them? Don't they turn all ideas upside down? Don't they stir up right and wrong into one hotch-potch? Don't they call lies everything that I know to be the truth? But the maddest thing of all is to see crowds of grown men, calling themselves Liberals, go about persuading themselves and others that they are friends of freedom! Did you ever hear anything like it, Katrina?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Yes, yes, no doubt. But——

PETRA *enters from the sitting-room.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Back from school already?

PETRA.

Yes; I have been dismissed.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Dismissed?

DR. STOCKMANN.

You too!

PETRA.

Mrs. Busk gave me notice, and so I thought it best to leave there and then.

DR. STOCKMANN.

You did perfectly right!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Who could have thought Mrs. Busk was such a bad woman!

PETRA.

Oh mother, Mrs. Busk isn't bad at all; I saw clearly how sorry she was. But she dared not do otherwise, she said; and so I am dismissed.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Laughing and rubbing his hands.*] She dared not do otherwise—just like the rest! Oh, it's delicious.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Oh well, after that frightful scene last night——

PETRA.

It wasn't only that. What do you think, father——?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well?

PETRA.

Mrs. Busk showed me no fewer than three letters she had received this morning——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Anonymous, of course?

PETRA.

Yes.

DR. STOCKMANN.

They never dare give their names, Katrina!

PETRA.

And two of them stated that a gentleman who is often at our house said at the club last night that I held extremely advanced opinions upon various things——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Of course you didn't deny it.

PETRA.

Of course not. You know Mrs. Busk herself is pretty advanced in her opinions when we're alone together; but now that this has come out about me, she dared not keep me on.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Some one that is often at our house, too. There, you see, Thomas, what comes of all your hospitality.

DR. STOCKMANN.

We won't live any longer in such a pig-sty! Pack up as quickly as you can, Katrina; let's get away—the sooner the better.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Hush! I think there is some one in the passage. See who it is, Petra.

PETRA.

[*Opening the door.*] Oh, is it you, Captain Horster? Please come in.

HORSTER.

[*From the hall.*] Good morning. I thought I might just look in and ask how you are.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Shaking his hand.*] Thanks; that's very good of you.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

And thank you for helping us through the crowd last night, Captain Horster.

PETRA.

How did you ever get home again?

HORSTER.

Oh, that was all right. I am tolerably able-bodied, you know; and those fellows' bark is worse than their bite.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, isn't it extraordinary, this piggish cowardice? Come here, and let me show you something! Look, here are all the stones they threw in at us. Only look at them! Upon my soul there aren't more than two decent-sized lumps in the whole heap; the rest are nothing but pebbles—mere gravel. They stood down there, and yelled, and swore they'd half kill me;—but as for really doing it—no, there's mighty little fear of t h a t in this town!

HORSTER.

You may thank your stars for that this time, Doctor.

DR. STOCKMANN.

So I do, of course. But it's depressing all the same; for if ever it should come to a serious national struggle, you may be sure public opinion would be for taking to its heels, and the compact majority would scamper for their lives like a flock of sheep, Captain Horster. T h a t is what's so melancholy to think of; it grieves me to the heart.—But deuce take it—it's foolish of me to feel anything of the sort! They have called me an enemy of the people; well then, let me b e an enemy of the people!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

That you'll never be, Thomas.

DR. STOCKMANN.

You'd better not take your oath of it, Katrina. A bad name may act like a pin-scratch in the lung. And that confounded word—I can't get rid of it; it has sunk deep into my heart; and there it lies gnawing and sucking like an acid. And no magnesia can cure me.

PETRA.

Pooh; you should only laugh at them, father.

HORSTER.

People will think differently yet, Doctor.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Yes, Thomas, that's as certain as that you are standing here.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, perhaps, when it is too late. Well, as they make their bed so they must lie! Let them go on wallowing here in their pig-sty, and learn to repent having driven a patriot into exile. When do you sail, Captain Horster?

HORSTER.

Well—that's really what I came to speak to you about——

DR. STOCKMANN.

What? Anything wrong with the ship?

HORSTER.

No; but the fact is, I shan't be sailing in her.

PETRA.

Surely you have not been dismissed?

HORSTER.

[*Smiling.*] Yes, I have.

PETRA.

You too!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

There, you see, Thomas.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And for the truth's sake! Oh, if I could possibly have imagined such a thing——

HORSTER.

You mustn't be troubled about this; I shall soon find a berth with some other company, elsewhere.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And this is that man Vik! A wealthy man, independent of every one! Faugh!

HORSTER.

Oh, for that matter, he's a very well-meaning man. He said himself he would gladly have kept me on if only he dared——

DR. STOCKMANN.

But he didn't dare? Of course not!

HORSTER.

It's not so easy, he said, when you belong to a party——

DR. STOCKMANN.

My gentleman has hit it there! A party is like a sausage-machine; it grinds all the brains together in one mash; and that's why we see nothing but porridge-heads and pulp-heads all around!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Now really, Thomas!

PETRA.

[*To* HORSTER.] If only you hadn't seen us home, perhaps it would not have come to this.

HORSTER.

I don't regret it.

PETRA.

[*Gives him her hand.*] Thank you for that!

HORSTER.

[*To* DR. STOCKMANN.] And then, too, I wanted to tell you this: if you are really determined to go abroad, I've thought of another way——

DR. STOCKMANN.

That's good—if only we can get off quickly——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Hush! Isn't that a knock?

PETRA.

I believe it is uncle.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Aha! [*Calls.*] Come in!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

My dear Thomas, now do promise me——

The BURGOMASTER *enters from the hall.*

BURGOMASTER.

[*In the doorway.*] Oh, you are engaged. Then I'd better——

DR. STOCKMANN.

No no; come in.

BURGOMASTER.

But I wanted to speak to you alone.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

We can go into the sitting-room.

HORSTER.

And I shall look in again presently.

DR. STOCKMANN.

No no; go with the ladies, Captain Horster; I must hear more about——

HORSTER.

All right, then I'll wait.

[*He follows* MRS. STOCKMANN *and* PETRA *into the sitting-room. The* BURGOMASTER *says nothing, but casts glances at the windows.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

I daresay you find it rather draughty here to-day? Put on your cap.

BURGOMASTER.

Thanks, if I may. [*Does so.*] I fancy I caught cold yesterday evening. I stood there shivering——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Really. On my soul, now, I found it quite warm enough.

BURGOMASTER.

I regret that it was not in my power to prevent these nocturnal excesses.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Have you anything else in particular to say to me?

BURGOMASTER.

[*Producing a large letter.*] I have this document for you from the Directors of the Baths.

DR. STOCKMANN.

My dismissal?

BURGOMASTER.

Yes; dated from to-day. [*Places the letter on the table.*] We are very sorry—but frankly, we dared not do otherwise, on account of public opinion.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Smiling.*] Dared not? I've heard that phrase already to-day.

BURGOMASTER.

I beg you to realise your position clearly. For the future, you cannot count upon any sort of practice in the town.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Devil take the practice! But how can you be so sure of that?

BURGOMASTER.

The House-owners' Association is sending round a circular from house to house, in which all well-disposed citizens are called upon not to employ you; and I dare swear that not a single head of a family will venture to refuse his signature; he simply d a r e not.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well well; I don't doubt that. But what then?

BURGOMASTER.

If I might advise, I would suggest that you should leave the town for a time——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, I've had some such idea in my mind already.

BURGOMASTER.

Good. And when you have had six months or so for mature deliberation, if you could make up your mind to acknowledge your error, with a few words of regret——

DR. STOCKMANN.

I might perhaps be reinstated, you think?

BURGOMASTER.

Perhaps it's not quite out of the question.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, but how about public opinion? You daren't, on account of public opinion.

BURGOMASTER.

Opinion is extremely variable. And, to speak candidly, it is of the greatest importance for us to have such an admission under your own hand.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, I daresay it would be mightily convenient for you! But you remember what I've said to you before about such foxes' tricks!

BURGOMASTER.

At that time your position was infinitely more favourable; at that time you thought you had the whole town at your back——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, and now I have the whole town on my back—— [*Flaring up.*] But no—not if I had the devil and his dam on my back—! Never—never, I tell you!

BURGOMASTER.

The father of a family has no right[1] to act as you are doing. You have no right to do it, Thomas.

[1] "Has no right" represents the Norwegian "tör ikke"—the phrase which, elsewhere in this scene, is translated "dare not." The latter rendering should perhaps have been adhered to throughout; but in this passage the Norwegian words convey a shade of meaning which is best represented by "has no right."

DR. STOCKMANN.

I have no right! There's only one thing in the world that a free man has no right to do; and do you know what that is?

BURGOMASTER.

No.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Of course not; but *I* will tell you. A free man has no right to wallow in filth like a cur; he has no right to act so that he ought to spit in his own face!

BURGOMASTER.

That sounds extremely plausible; and if there were not another explanation of your obstinacy—but we all know there is——

DR. STOCKMANN.

What do you mean by that?

BURGOMASTER.

You understand well enough. But as your brother, and as a man who knows the world, I warn you not to build too confidently upon prospects and expectations that may very likely come to nothing.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Why, what on earth are you driving at?

BURGOMASTER.

Do you really want me to believe that you are ignorant of the terms of old Morten Kiil's will?

DR. STOCKMANN.

I know that the little he has is to go to a home for old and needy artisans. But what has that got to do with me?

BURGOMASTER.

To begin with, "the little he has" is no trifle. Morten Kiil is a tolerably wealthy man.

DR. STOCKMANN.

I have never had the least notion of that!

BURGOMASTER.

H'm—really? Then I suppose you have no notion that a not inconsiderable part of his fortune is to go to your children, you and your wife having a life-interest in it. Has he not told you that?

DR. STOCKMANN.

No, I'll be hanged if he has! On the contrary, he has done nothing but grumble about being so preposterously over-taxed. But are you really sure of this, Peter?

BURGOMASTER.

I have it from a thoroughly trustworthy source.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Why, good heavens, then Katrina's provided for—and the children too! Oh, I must tell her——[*Calls.*] Katrina, Katrina!

BURGOMASTER.

[*Holding him back.*] Hush! don't say anything about it yet.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Opening the door.*] What is it?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Nothing my dear; go in again.

[MRS. STOCKMANN *closes the door.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Pacing up and down.*] Provided for! Only think—all of them provided for! And for life! After all, it's a grand thing to feel yourself secure!

BURGOMASTER.

Yes, but that is just what you are not. Morten Kiil can revoke his will any day or hour he chooses.

DR. STOCKMANN.

But he won't, my good Peter. The Badger is only too delighted to see me fall foul of you and your wiseacre friends.

BURGOMASTER.

[*Starts and looks searchingly at him.*] Aha! That throws a new light o n a good many things.

DR. STOCKMANN.

What things?

BURGOMASTER.

So the whole affair has been a carefully-concocted intrigue. Your recklessly violent onslaught—in the name of truth—upon the leading men of the town——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, what of it?

BURGOMASTER.

It was nothing but a preconcerted requital for that vindictive old Morten Kiil's will.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Almost speechless.*] Peter—you are the most abominable plebeian I have ever known in all my born days.

BURGOMASTER.

All is over between us. Your dismissal is irrevocable —for now we have a weapon against you. [*He goes out.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Shame! shame! shame! [*Calls.*] Katrina! The floor must be scrubbed after him! Tell her to come here with a pail—what's her name? confound it—the girl with the smudge on her nose——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*In the sitting-room doorway.*] Hush, hush! Thomas!

PETRA.

[*Also in the doorway.*] Father, here's grandfather; he wants to know if he can speak to you alone.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, of course he can. [*By the door.*] Come in, father-in-law.

MORTEN KIIL *enters.* DR. STOCKMANN *closes the door behind him.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, what is it? Sit down.

MORTEN KIIL.

I won't sit down. [*Looking about him.*] It looks cheerful here to-day, Stockmann.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, don't you think so?

MORTEN KIIL.

Sure enough. And you've plenty of fresh air too; you've got your fill of that oxygen you were talking about yesterday. You must have a rare good conscience to-day, I should think.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, I have.

MORTEN KIIL.

So I should suppose. [*Tapping himself on the breast.*] But do you know what *I* have got here?

DR. STOCKMANN.

A good conscience too, I hope.

MORTEN KIIL.

Pooh! No; something far better than that.

[*Takes out a large pocket-book, opens it, and shows* STOCKMANN *a bundle of papers.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Looking at him in astonishment.*] Shares in the Baths!

MORTEN KIIL.

They weren't difficult to get to-day.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And you've gone and bought these up——?

MORTEN KIIL.

All I had the money to pay for.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Why, my dear sir,—just when things are in such a desperate way at the Baths——

MORTEN KIIL.

If you behave like a reasonable being, you can soon set the Baths all right again.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, you can see for yourself I'm doing all I can. But the people of this town are mad!

MORTEN KIIL.

You said yesterday that the worst filth came from my tannery. Now, if that's true, then my grandfather, and my father before me, and I myself, have for ever so many years been poisoning the town with filth, like three destroying angels. Do you think I'm going to sit quiet under such a reproach?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Unfortunately, you can't help it.

MORTEN KIIL.

No, thank you. I hold fast to my good name. I've heard that people call me "the Badger." A badger's a sort of a pig, I know; but I'm determined to give them the lie. I will live and die a clean man.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And how will you manage t h a t?

MORTEN KIIL.

Y o u shall make me clean, Stockmann.

DR. STOCKMANN.

I!

MORTEN KIIL.

Do you know what money I've used to buy these shares with? No, you can't know; but now I'll tell you. It's the money Katrina and Petra and the boys are to have after my death. For, you see, I've laid by something after all.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Flaring up.*] And you've taken Katrina's money and done t h i s with it!

MORTEN KIIL.

Yes; the whole of it is invested in the Baths now. And now I want to see if you're really so stark, staring mad, after all, Stockmann. If you go on making out that these beasts and other abominations dribble down from my tannery, it'll be just as if you were to flay broad stripes of Katrina's skin—and Petra's too, and the boys! No decent father would ever do that—unless he were a madman.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Walking up and down.*] Yes, but I a m a madman; I a m a madman!

MORTEN KIIL.

You surely can't be so raving, ramping mad where your wife and children are concerned.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Stopping in front of him.*] Why couldn't you have spoken to me before you went and bought all that rubbish?

MORTEN KIIL.

What's done can't be undone.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Walking restlessly about.*] If only I weren't so certain about the affair——! But I am absolutely convinced that I'm right.

MORTEN KIIL.

[*Weighing the pocket-book in his hand.*] If you stick to this lunacy, these aren't worth much.

[*Puts the book into his pocket.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

But, deuce take it! surely science ought to be able to hit upon some antidote, some sort of prophylactic——

MORTEN KIIL.

Do you mean something to kill the beasts?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, or at least to make them harmless.

MORTEN KIIL.

Couldn't you try ratsbane?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Oh, nonsense, nonsense!—But since every one declares it's nothing but fancy, why fancy let it be! Let them have it their own way! Haven't the ignorant, narrow-hearted curs reviled me as an enemy of the people?—and weren't they on the point of tearing the clothes off my back?

MORTEN KIIL.

And they've smashed all your windows for you too!

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, and then there's one's duty to one's family! I must talk that over with Katrina; such things are more in her line.

MORTEN KIIL.

That's right! You just follow the advice of a sensible woman.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Turning upon him angrily.*] How could you act so preposterously! Risking Katrina's money, and putting me to this horrible torture! When I look at you, I seem to see the devil himself——!

MORTEN KIIL.

Then I'd better be off. But I must hear from you, yes or no, by two o'clock. If it's n o, all the shares go to the Hospital—and that this very day.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And what will Katrina get?

MORTEN KIIL.

Not a rap.

[*The door leading to the hall opens.* HOVSTAD *and* ASLAKSEN *are seen outside it.*

MORTEN KIIL.

Hullo! look at these two.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Staring at them.*] What! Do y o u actually venture to come here?

HOVSTAD.

Why, to be sure we do.

ASLAKSEN.

You see, we've something to discuss with you.

MORTEN KIIL.

[*Whispers.*] Yes or no—by two o'clock.

ASLAKSEN.

[*With a glance at* HOVSTAD.] Aha!

[MORTEN KIIL *goes out.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, what do you want with me? Be brief.

HOVSTAD.

I can quite understand that you resent our attitude at the meeting yesterday——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Your attitude, you say? Yes, it was a pretty attitude! I call it the attitude of cowards—of old women—— Shame upon you!

HOVSTAD.

Call it what you will; but we c o u l d not act otherwise.

DR. STOCKMANN.

You d a r e d not, I suppose? Isn't that so?

HOVSTAD.

Yes, if you like to put it so.

ASLAKSEN.

But why didn't you just say a word to us beforehand? The merest hint to Mr. Hovstad or to me——

DR. STOCKMANN.

A hint? What about?

ASLAKSEN.

About what was really behind it all.

DR. STOCKMANN.

I don't in the least understand you?

ASLAKSEN.

[*Nods confidentially.*] Oh yes, you do, Dr. Stockmann.

HOVSTAD.

It's no good making a mystery of it any longer.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Looking from one to the other.*] Why, what in the devil's name——!

ASLAKSEN.

May I ask—isn't your father-in-law going about the town buying up all the Bath stock?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, he has been buying Bath stock to-day but——

ASLAKSEN.

It would have been more prudent to let somebody else do that—some one not so closely connected with you.

HOVSTAD.

And then you ought not to have appeared in the matter under your own name. No one need have known that the attack on the Baths came from you. You should have taken me into your counsels, Dr. Stockmann.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Stares straight in front of him; a light seems to break in upon him, and he says as though thunder-struck.*] Is this possible? Can such things be?

ASLAKSEN.

[*Smiling.*] It's plain enough that they can. But they ought to be managed delicately, you understand.

HOVSTAD.

And there ought to be more people in it; for the responsibility always falls more lightly when there are several to share it.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Calmly.*] In one word, gentlemen—what is it you want?

ASLAKSEN.

Mr. Hovstad can best——

HOVSTAD.

No, you explain, Aslaksen.

ASLAKSEN.

Well, it's this: now that we know how the matter really stands, we believe we can venture to place the *People's Messenger* at your disposal.

DR. STOCKMANN.

You can venture to n o w, eh? But how about public opinion? Aren't you afraid of bringing down a storm upon us?

HOVSTAD.

We must manage to ride out the storm.

ASLAKSEN.

And you must be ready to put about quickly, Doctor. As soon as your attack has done its work——

DR. STOCKMANN.

As soon as my father-in-law and I have bought up the shares at a discount, you mean?

HOVSTAD.

I presume it is mainly on scientific grounds that you want to take the management of the Baths into your own hands.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Of course; it was on scientific grounds that I got the old Badger to stand in with me. And then we'll tinker up the water-works a little, and potter about a bit down

at the beach, without its costing the town sixpence. That ought to do the business? Eh?

HOVSTAD.

I think so—if you have the *Messenger* to back you up.

ASLAKSEN.

In a free community the press is a power, Doctor.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, indeed; and so is public opinion. And you, Mr. Aslaksen—I suppose you will answer for the House-owners' Association?

ASLAKSEN.

Both for the House-owners' Association and the Temperance Society. You may make your mind easy.

DR. STOCKMANN.

But, gentlemen—really I'm quite ashamed to mention such a thing—but—what return——?

HOVSTAD.

Of course, we should prefer to give you our support for nothing. But the *Messenger* is not very firmly established; it's not getting on as it ought to; and I should be very sorry to have to stop the paper just now, when there's so much to be done in general politics.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Naturally; that would be very hard for a friend of the people like you. [*Flaring up.*] But I—I am an enemy

of the people! [*Striding about the room.*] Where's my stick? Where the devil is my stick?

HOVSTAD.

What do you mean?

ASLAKSEN.

Surely you wouldn't——

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Standing still.*] And suppose I don't give you a single farthing out of all my shares? You must remember we rich folk don't like parting with our money.

HOVSTAD.

And you must remember that this business of the shares can be represented in two ways.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, you are the man for that; if I don't come to the rescue of the *Messenger*, you'll manage to put a vile complexion on the affair; you'll hunt me down, I suppose—bait me—try to throttle me as a dog throttles a hare!

HOVSTAD.

That's a law of nature—every animal fights for its own subsistence.

ASLAKSEN.

And must take its food where it can find it, you know.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Then see if you can't find some out in the gutter; [*Striding about the room*] for now, by heaven! we shall see which is the strongest animal of us three. [*Finds his umbrella and brandishes it.*] Now, look here——!

HOVSTAD.

You surely don't mean to assault us!

ASLAKSEN.

I say, be careful with that umbrella!

DR. STOCKMANN.

Out at the window with you, Mr. Hovstad!

HOVSTAD.

[*By the hall door.*] Are you utterly crazy?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Out at the window, Mr. Aslaksen! Jump I tell you! Be quick about it!

ASLAKSEN.

[*Running round the writing-table.*] Moderation, Doctor; I'm not at all strong; I can't stand much—— [*Screams.*] Help! help!

MRS. STOCKMANN, PETRA, *and* HORSTER *enter from sitting-room.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Good heavens, Thomas! what c a n be the matter?

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Brandishing the umbrella.*] Jump! I tell you! Out into the gutter!

HOVSTAD.

An unprovoked assault! . I call you to witness, Captain Horster. [*Rushes off through the hall.*

ASLAKSEN.

[*Bewildered.*] If one only knew the local situation——![1] [*He slinks out by the sitting-room door.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Holding back the* DOCTOR.] Now, do restrain yourself, Thomas!

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Throwing down the umbrella.*] I'll be hanged if they haven't got off after all.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Why, what can they have wanted with you?

DR. STOCKMANN.

I'll tell you afterwards; I have other things to think of now. [*Goes to the table and writes on a visiting-card.*] Look here, Katrina: what's written here?

[1] "De lokale forholde"—the local conditions, or the circumstances of the locality, a phrase constantly in Aslaksen's mouth in *The League of Youth.* In the present context it is about equivalent to "the lie of the land."

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Three big N o e s; what does that mean?

DR. STOCKMANN.

That I'll tell you afterwards, too. [*Handing the card.*] There, Petra; let smudgy-face run to the Badger's with this as fast as she can. Be quick!

[PETRA *goes out through the hall with the card.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, if I haven't had visits to-day from all the emissaries of the devil! But now I'll sharpen my pen against them till it becomes a goad; I'll dip it in gall and venom; I'll hurl my inkstand straight at their skulls.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

You forget we are going away, Thomas.

PETRA *returns.*

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well?

PETRA.

She has gone.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Good. Going away, do you say? No, I'll be damned if we do; we stay where we are, Katrina!

PETRA.

Stay!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Here in the town?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, here; the field of battle is here; here the fight must be fought; here I will conquer! As soon as my trousers are mended, I shall go out into the town and look for a house; we must have a roof over our heads for the winter.

HORSTER.

That you can have in my house.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Can I?

HORSTER.

Yes, there's no difficulty about that. I have room enough, and I'm hardly ever at home myself.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Oh, how kind of you, Captain Horster.

PETRA.

Thank you!

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Shaking his hand.*] Thanks, thanks! So that is off my mind. And this very day I shall set to work in earnest. Oh, there's no end of work to be done here, Katrina! It's a good thing I shall have all my time at my disposal now; for you must know I've had notice from the Baths——

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Sighing.*] Oh yes, I was expecting that.

DR. STOCKMANN.

——And now they want to take away my practice as well. But let them! The poor I shall keep anyhow—those that can't pay; and, good Lord! it's they that need me most. But by heaven! I'll make them listen to me; I'll preach to them in season and out of season, as the saying goes.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

My dear Thomas, I should have thought you had learnt what good preaching does.

DR. STOCKMANN.

You really are absurd, Katrina. Am I to let myself be beaten off the field by public opinion, and the compact majority, and all that sort of devilry? No, thank you! Besides, my point is so simple, so clear and straightforward. I only want to drive it into the heads of these curs that the Liberals are the craftiest foes free men have to face; that party-programmes wring the necks of all young and living truths; that considerations of expediency turn justice and morality upside down, until life here becomes simply unlivable. Come, Captain Horster, don't you think I shall be able to make the people understand that?

HORSTER.

Maybe; I don't know much about these things myself.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, you see—this is the way of it! It's the party-leaders that must be exterminated. For a party-leader is just like a wolf, you see—like a ravening wolf; he must devour a certain number of smaller animals a year, if he's to exist at all. Just look at Hovstad and Aslaksen! How many small animals they polish off—or at least mangle and maim, so that they're fit for nothing else but to be house-owners and subscribers to the *People's Messenger!* [*Sits on the edge of the table.*] Just come here, Katrina—see how bravely the sun shines to-day! And how the blessëd fresh spring air blows in upon me!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Yes, if only we could live on sunshine and spring air, Thomas.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Well, you'll have to pinch and save to eke them out—and then we shall get on all right. That's what troubles me least. No, what d o e s trouble me is that I don't see any man free enough and high-minded enough to dare to take up my work after me.

PETRA.

Oh, don't think about that, father; you have time enough before you.—Why, see, there are the boys already.

EILIF *and* MORTEN *enter from the sitting-room.*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Have you a holiday to-day?

MORTEN.

No; but we had a fight with the other fellows in play-time——

EILIF.

That's not true; it was the other fellows that fought us.

MORTEN.

Yes, and then Mr. Rörlund said we had better stop at home for a few days.

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*Snapping his fingers and springing down from the table.*] Now I have it! Now I have it, on my soul! You shall never set foot in school again!

THE BOYS.

Never go to school!

MRS. STOCKMANN.

Why, Thomas——

DR. STOCKMANN.

Never, I say! I shall teach you myself—that's to say, I won't teach you any mortal thing——

MORTEN.

Hurrah!

DR. STOCKMANN.

——but I shall help you to grow into free, high-minded men.—Look here, you'll have to help me, Petra.

PETRA.

Yes, father, you may be sure I will.

DR. STOCKMANN.

And we'll have our school in the room where they reviled me as an enemy of the people. But we must have more pupils. I must have at least a dozen boys to begin with.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

You'll never get them in this town.

DR. STOCKMANN.

We shall see. [*To the boys.*] Don't you know any street urchins—any regular ragamuffins——?

MORTEN.

Yes, father, I know lots!

DR. STOCKMANN.

That's all right; bring me a few of them. I shall experiment with the street-curs for once in a way; there are sometimes excellent heads amongst them.

MORTEN.

But what are we to do when we've grown into free and high-minded men?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Drive all the wolves out to the far west, boys!

[EILIF *looks rather doubtful;* MORTEN *jumps about shouting "Hurrah!"*

MRS. STOCKMANN.

If only the wolves don't drive you out, Thomas.

DR. STOCKMANN.

Are you quite mad, Katrina! Drive me out! Now that I am the strongest man in the town?

MRS. STOCKMANN.

The strongest—now?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, I venture to say this: that now I am one of the strongest men in the whole world.

MORTEN.

I say, what fun!

DR. STOCKMANN.

[*In a subdued voice.*] Hush; you mustn't speak about it yet: but I have made a great discovery.

MRS. STOCKMANN.

What, another?

DR. STOCKMANN.

Yes, of course! [*Gathers them about him, and speaks confidentially.*] This is what I have discovered, you see: the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone. Not original Schiller's "Tell."

MRS. STOCKMANN.

[*Shakes her head, smiling.*] Ah, Thomas dear——!

PETRA.

[*Grasping his hands cheerily.*] Father!

THE END.

THE WILD DUCK

THE WILD DUCK

INTRODUCTION *

THE first mention of *The Wild Duck* (as yet unnamed) occurs in a letter from Ibsen to George Brandes, dated Rome, June 12, 1883, some six months after the appearance of *An Enemy of the People*. "I am revolving in my mind just now," he says, "the plan of a new dramatic work in four acts. From time to time a variety of whimsies gathers in one's mind, and one wants to find an outlet for them. But as the play will neither deal with the Supreme Court nor with the Absolute Veto, nor even with the Pure Flag, it can hardly count upon attracting much attention in Norway. Let us hope, however, that it may find a hearing elsewhere." The allusion in this passage is to the great constitutional struggle of 1880–84, of which some account will have to be given in the Introduction to *Rosmersholm*. The "Pure Flag" agitation aimed at, and obtained, the exclusion from the Norwegian flag of the mark of union with Sweden, and was thus a preliminary step towards the severance of the two kingdoms. The word which I have translated "whimsies" is in the original *galskaber*, which might be literally rendered "mad fancies" or "crazy notions." This word, or *galskab* in the singular, was Ibsen's favourite term for his conceptions as they grew up in his mind. I well remember

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his saying to me, while he was engaged on *The Lady from the Sea*, "I hope to have some tomfoolery [*galskab*] ready for next year." Sometimes he would vary the expression and say *djævelskab*, or "devilry."

Of this particular "tomfoolery" we hear no more for a full year. Then, at the end of June, 1884, he writes in almost identical terms to Brandes and to Theodor Caspari, announcing its completion in the rough. His letter to Caspari is dated Rome, June 27. "All last winter," he says, "I have been pondering over some new whimsies, and have wrestled with them till at last they took dramatic form in a five-act play which I have just completed. That is to say, I have completed the rough draft of it. Now comes the more delicate elaboration, the more energetic individualisation of the characters and their methods of expression. In order to find the requisite quiet and solitude for this work, I am going in a few days to Gossensass, in the Tyrol." This little glimpse into his workshop is particularly interesting.

It becomes all the more interesting when, on turning to the *Literary Remains*, we find that the rough draft, which Ibsen took with him to Gossensass, has been preserved, so that we can see, on comparing the two forms, what he meant by "elaboration and individualisation."

The draft of the first act contains 208 speeches, the completed act 302; which practically means that in the process of elaboration the act became half as long again. It is scarcely too much to say that everything that is most characteristic is added in the revision. The idea of making Old Ekdal an ex-officer was an afterthought. In the

draft we are told that he was a lawyer, and we gather that he had made himself useful to Werle in some questionable transactions, and was afterwards deserted by him. On the other hand, a small touch of rebellion on Old Ekdal's part against the familiarity with which he is treated by Werle's butler has disappeared from the final form. I venture to think that the chatter of the Chamberlains has not been improved in the revision. Each of them, by the way, figures under his name in the draft, and not under a mere description. Gregers Werle was originally supposed to have been living in Paris, not playing the hermit at "the works." He was apparently conceived as more of a man of the world than he ultimately became. When one of the Chamberlains complains of his digestion, Gregers remarks, "There are remedies for everything, Mr. Flor—else why do you suppose that an all-wise Providence has created mineral waters?"—a speech which another Chamberlain reproves as "Parisian," and which, indeed, would scarcely harmonise with the later conception of his character. The Werle family was originally named "Walle"—the change to Werle suddenly occurs in the middle of the act, at the point where Old Ekdal passes through the room. There is no allusion to the fact of there having been thirteen at table; but the idea had evidently occurred to Ibsen before he drafted the second act, in which he makes Hialmar say, "There were twelve or fourteen of us." Of the scene between Hialmar and Gregers, so indispensable to the ultimate development, there is only the slightest trace. In the scene between Gregers and Werle, Gregers evidently knows that Hialmar is married to his father's ex-mistress, but it is not

clear how he has learnt the fact. Old Werle makes no allusion to "people who dive to the bottom the moment they get a couple of slugs in their body," whence it would almost seem that the symbol of the wild duck, which was to give the play its title, had not yet entered the poet's mind.

The draft of the second act is very fragmentary, but we can see that all the leading ideas of the play—except one—are already present to Ibsen's mind. The three remaining acts are pretty fully drafted; nor did the poet seriously depart from the main lines here laid down. What he did was to fill in and enrich the characterisation. Hedvig in particular gains immensely in the revision. In the draft she is comparatively commonplace; much of the delicacy and beauty of the character, which make her fate so heartrending, came to the poet as an afterthought. And it is curious to note how one single invention, apparently trifling in itself, may almost be said to have transformed the character and the play—the invention, I mean, of Werle's weak eyes and Hedvig's threatened blindness. Nowhere in the draft is there any hint of this idea. The most admirably effective strand in the finished fabric was not at first on the poet's loom, but was woven in as an afterthought. It served a multiplicity of purposes: it helped out the plot, it added to the pathos of Hedvig's figure, and it illustrated Hialmar's selfishness in allowing her to strain her eyes over the retouching which he himself ought to have done. One can imagine the artist's joy in achieving so perfect an example of constructive economy. An idea which presents itself in rudimentary form in the draft is that of Hialmar Ekdal's "invention"—here called his "problem." The later develop-

ment of this wonderful "invention" forms a very good specimen of Ibsen's method. The draft contains no hint of Hialmar's delightful exposition of the part played by the pistol in the tragedy of the House of Ekdal. Everywhere, on a close comparison of the texts, we see an intensive imagination lighting up, as it were, what was at first somewhat cold and colourless. In this case, as in many others, Ibsen's final working-over may be compared to a switching-on of the electricity.

From Gossensass he wrote to Hegel on September 2: "Herewith I send you the manuscript of my new play, *The Wild Duck*, which has occupied me daily for the past four months, and from which I cannot part without a sense of regret. The characters in this play, despite their many frailties, have, in the course of our long daily association, endeared themselves to me. However, I hope they will also find good and kind friends among the great reading public, and not least among the player-folk, to whom they all, without exception, offer problems worth the solving. But the study and presentation of these personages will not be easy. . . . This new play in some ways occupies a place apart among my dramatic productions; its method of development [literally, of advance] is in many respects divergent from that of its predecessors. But for the present I shall say no more on this subject. The critics will no doubt discover the points in question; at all events, they will find a good deal to wrangle about, a good deal to interpret. Moreover, I think *The Wild Duck* may perhaps lure some of our younger dramatists into new paths, and this I hold to be desirable."

The play was published on November 11, 1884, and was acted at all the leading theatres of Scandinavia in January or February, 1885. Ibsen's estimate of its acting value was fully justified. It everywhere proved itself immensely effective on the stage, and Hialmar, Gina, and Hedvig have made, or greatly enhanced, the reputation of many an actor and actress. Hialmar was one of the chief successes of Emil Poulsen, the leading Danish actor of his day, who placed the second act of *The Wild Duck* in the programme of his farewell performance. It took more than three years for the play to reach the German stage. It was first acted in Berlin in March, 1888; but thereafter it rapidly spread throughout Germany and Austria, and everywhere took firm hold. It was on several occasions, and in various cities, selected for performance in Ibsen's presence, as representing the best that the local theatre could do. In Paris it was produced at the Théâtre-Libre in 1891, and was pronounced by Francisque Sarcey to be "obscure, incoherent, insupportable," but nevertheless to leave "a profound impression." In London it was first produced by the Independent Theatre Society on May 4, 1894, Mr. W. L. Abingdon playing Hialmar, and Miss Winifred Fraser giving a delightful performance of Hedvig. The late Clement Scott's pronouncement on it was that "to make a fuss about so feeble a production was to insult dramatic literature and to outrage common sense." It was repeated at the Globe Theatre in May, 1897, with Mr. Laurence Irving as Hialmar and Miss Fraser again as Hedvig. In October, 1905, it was revived at the Court Theatre, with Mr. Granville Barker as Hialmar and Miss Dorothy Minto as Hedvig.

Of American performances I find no record. It has been acted in Italy and in Greece, I know not with what success. The fact that it has no part for a "leading lady" has rendered it less of an international stock-piece than *A Doll's House*, *Hedda Gabler*, or even *Rosmersholm*.

There can be no doubt that *The Wild Duck* marks a reaction in the poet's mood, following upon the eager vivacity wherewith, in *An Enemy of the People*, he had flung his defiance at the "compact Liberal majority," which, as the reception of *Ghosts* had proved, could not endure to be told the truth. Having said his say and liberated his soul, he now began to ask himself whether human nature was, after all, capable of assimilating the strong meat of truth—whether illusion might not be, for the average man, the only thing that could make life livable. It would be too much to say that the play gives a generally affirmative answer to this question. On the contrary, its last lines express pretty clearly the poet's firm conviction that if life cannot reconcile itself with truth, then life may as well go to the wall. Nevertheless his very devotion to truth forces him to realise and admit that it is an antitoxin which, rashly injected at wrong times or in wrong doses, may produce disastrous results. It ought not to be indiscriminately administered by "quacksalvers."

Gregers Werle is unquestionably a piece of ironic self-portraiture. In his habit of "pestering people, in their poverty, with the claim of the ideal," the poet adumbrates his own conduct from *Brand* onwards, but especially in *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People*. Relling, again, is an embodiment of the mood which was dominant during the conception of the play—the mood of pitying contempt

for that poor thing human nature, as embodied in Hialmar. An actor who, in playing the part of Relling, made up as Ibsen himself, has been blamed for having committed a fault, not only of taste, but of interpretation, since Gregers (it is maintained) is the true Ibsen. But the fact is that both characters represent the poet. They embody the struggle in his mind between idealism and cynical despondency. There can be no doubt, however, that in some measure he consciously identified himself with Gregers. In a letter to Mr. Gosse, written in 1872, he had employed in his own person the very phrase, *den ideale fordring*—"the claim of the ideal"—which is Gregers' watchword. The use of this sufficiently obvious phrase, however, does not mean much. Far stronger evidence of identification is afforded by John Paulsen[1] in some anecdotes he relates of Ibsen's habits of "self-help"—evidence which we may all the more safely accept, as Herr Paulsen seems to have been unconscious of its bearing upon the character of Gregers. "Ibsen," he says, "was always bent upon doing things himself, so as not to give trouble to servants. His ideal was 'the self-made man.'[2] Thus, if a button came off one of his garments he would retire to his own room, lock the door, and after many comical and unnecessary preliminaries proceed to sew on the button himself, with the same care with which he wrote the fair copy of a new play. Such an important task he could not possibly entrust to any one else, not even to his wife. One of his paradoxes was that 'a woman

[1] *Samliv med Ibsen*, p. 33.

[2] Herr Paulsen uses the English words; but it will appear from the sequel that Ibsen's ideal was not so much the self-made as the self-mended man.

never knew how to sew on a button so that it would hold.' But if he himself sewed it on, it held to all eternity. Fru Ibsen smiled roguishly and subtly when the creator of Nora came out with such anti-feminist sentiments. Afterwards she told me in confidence, 'It is true that Ibsen himself sews on his vagrant buttons; but the fact that they hold so well is *my* doing, for, without his knowledge, I always "finish them off," which he forgets to do. But don't disturb his conviction: it makes him so happy.' "

"One winter day in Munich," Herr Paulsen continues, "Ibsen asked me with a serious and even anxious countenance, 'Tell me one thing, Paulsen—do you black your own boots every morning?' I was taken aback, and doubtless looked quite guilty as I answered, 'No.' I had a vaguely uncomfortable sense that I had failed in a duty to myself and to society. 'But you really ought to do so. It will make you feel a different man. One should never let others do what one can do oneself. If you begin with blacking your boots, you will get on to putting your room in order, laying the fire, etc. In this way you will at last find yourself an emancipated man, independent of Tom, Dick, or Harry.' I promised to follow his advice, but have unfortunately not kept my word." It is evident that Ibsen purposely transferred to Gregers this characteristic of his own; and the sentiments with which Gina regards it are probably not unlike those which Fru Ibsen may from time to time have manifested. We could scarcely demand clearer proof that in Gregers the poet was laughing at himself.

To Hedvig, Ibsen gave the name of his only sister, and in many respects she seems to have served as a model for

the character. She was the poet's favourite among all his relatives. "You are certainly the best of us," he wrote to her in 1869. Björnstjerne Björnson said, after making her acquaintance, that he now understood what a large element of heredity there was in Ibsen's bent towards mysticism. We may be sure that Hedvig's researches among the books left by the old sea-captain, and her dislike for the frontispiece of Harrison's *History of London*, are remembered traits from the home-life of the poet's childhood. It does not seem to be known who had the honour of "sitting for" the character of Hialmar. Probably he is a composite of many originals. Moreover, he is obviously a younger brother of Peer Gynt. Deprive Peer Gynt of his sense of humour, and clip the wings of his imagination, and you have Hialmar Ekdal.

I confess I do not know quite definitely what Ibsen had in mind when he spoke of *The Wild Duck* holding "a place apart" among his productions, and exemplifying a technique (for he is evidently thinking of its technical development) "divergent" from that of its predecessors. I should rather say that it marked the continuation and consummation of the technical method which he had been elaborating from *Pillars of Society* onward. It is the first example of what we may term his retrospective method, in its full complexity. *Pillars of Society* and *A Doll's House* may be called semi-retrospective; something like half of the essential action takes place before the eyes of the audience. *Ghosts* is almost wholly retrospective; as soon as the past has been fully unravelled the action is over, and only the catastrophe remains; but in this case the past to be unravelled is comparatively simple and easy

of disentanglement. *An Enemy of the People* is scarcely retrospective at all; almost the whole of its action falls within the frame of the picture. In *The Wild Duck*, on the other hand, the unravelling of the past is a task of infinite subtlety and elaborate art. The execution of this task shows a marvellous and hitherto unexampled grasp of mind. Never before, certainly, had the poet displayed such an amazing power of fascinating and absorbing us by the gradual withdrawal of veil after veil from the past; and as every event was also a trait of character, it followed that never before had his dialogue been so saturated, as it were, with character-revelation. The development of the drama reminds one of the practice (in itself a very bad practice) of certain modern stage-managers, who are fond of raising their curtain on a dark scene, and then gradually lighting it up by a series of touches on the electric switchboard. First there comes a glimmer from the right, then a flash from the left; then the background is suffused with light, so that we see objects standing out against it in profile, but cannot as yet discern their details. Then comes a ray from this batten, a gleam from that; here a penetrating shaft of light, there a lambent glow; until at last the footlights are turned on at full, and every nook and cranny of the scene stands revealed in a blaze of luminosity. But Ibsen's switchboard is far more subtly divided than that of even the most modern theatre. At every touch upon it, some single, cunningly-placed, ingeniously-dissembled burner kindles, almost unnoticed save by the most watchful eye; so that the full light spreads over the scene as imperceptibly as dawn grows into day.

It seems to me, then, that *The Wild Duck* is a consummation rather than a new departure. Assuredly it marks the summit of the poet's achievement (in modern prose) up to that date. Its only possible rival is *Ghosts;* and who does not feel the greater richness, depth, suppleness, and variety of the later play? It gives us, in a word, a larger segment of life.

THE WILD DUCK

(1884)

CHARACTERS

WERLE, *a merchant, manufacturer, etc.*
GREGERS WERLE, *his son.*
OLD EKDAL.
HIALMAR EKDAL, *his son, a photographer.*
GINA EKDAL, *Hialmar's wife.*
HEDVIG, *their daughter, a girl of fourteen.*
MRS. SÖRBY, *Werle's housekeeper.*
RELLING, *a doctor.*
MOLVIK, *a student of theology.*
GRÅBERG, *Werle's bookkeeper.*
PETTERSEN, *Werle's servant.*
JENSEN, *a hired waiter.*
A FLABBY GENTLEMAN.
A THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN.
A SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN.
Six other gentlemen, guests at Werle's dinner-party.
Several hired waiters.

The first act passes in Werle's house, the remaining acts at Hialmar Ekdal's.

Pronunciation of Names: Gregers Werle=Grayghers Verlë; Hialmar Ekdal=Yalmar Aykdal; Gina=Gheena; Gråberg=Groberg; Jensen=Yensen.

THE WILD DUCK

PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

ACT FIRST

At WERLE'S *house. A richly and comfortably furnished study; bookcases and upholstered furniture; a writing-table, with papers and documents, in the centre of the room; lighted lamps with green shades, giving a subdued light. At the back, open folding-doors with curtains drawn back. Within is seen a large and handsome room, brilliantly lighted with lamps and branching candlesticks. In front, on the right (in the study), a small baize door leads into* WERLE'S *office. On the left, in front, a fireplace with a glowing coal fire, and farther back a double door leading into the dining-room.*

WERLE'S *servant,* PETTERSEN, *in livery, and* JENSEN, *the hired waiter, in black, are putting the study in order. In the large room, two or three other hired waiters are moving about, arranging things and lighting more candles. From the dining-room, the hum of conversation and laughter of many voices are heard; a glass is tapped with a knife; silence follows, and a toast is proposed; shouts of "Bravo!" and then again a buzz of conversation.*

PETTERSEN.

[*Lights a lamp on the chimney-place and places a shade over it.*] Hark to them, Jensen! now the old man's on his legs holding a long palaver about Mrs. Sörby.

JENSEN.

[*Pushing forward an arm-chair.*] Is it true, what folks say, that they're—very good friends, eh?

PETTERSEN.

Lord knows.

JENSEN.

I've heard tell as he's been a lively customer in his day.

PETTERSEN.

May be.

JENSEN.

And he's giving this spread in honour of his son, they say.

PETTERSEN.

Yes. His son came home yesterday.

JENSEN.

This is the first time I ever heard as Mr. Werle had a son.

PETTERSEN.

Oh yes, he has a son, right enough. But he's a fixture, as you might say, up at the Höidal works. He's never once come to town all the years I've been in service here.

A WAITER.

[*In the doorway of the other room.*] Pettersen, here's an old fellow wanting——

PETTERSEN.

[*Mutters.*] The devil—who's this now?

OLD EKDAL *appears from the right, in the inner room. He is dressed in a threadbare overcoat with a high collar; he wears woollen mittens, and carries in his hand a stick and a fur cap. Under his arm, a brown paper parcel. Dirty red-brown wig and small grey moustache.*

PETTERSEN.

[*Goes towards him.*] Good Lord—what do y o u want here?

EKDAL.

[*In the doorway.*] Must get into the office, Pettersen.

PETTERSEN.

The office was closed an hour ago, and——

EKDAL.

So they told me at the front door. But Gråberg's in there still. Let me slip in this way, Pettersen; there's a good fellow. [*Points towards the baize door.*] It's not the first time I've come this way.

PETTERSEN.

Well, you may pass. [*Opens the door.*] But mind you go out again the proper way, for we've got company.

EKDAL.

I know, I know—h'm! Thanks, Pettersen, good old friend! Thanks! [*Mutters softly.*] Ass!

[*He goes into the office;* PETTERSEN *shuts the door after him.*

JENSEN.

Is he one of the office people?

PETTERSEN.

No, he's only an outside hand that does odd jobs of copying. But he's been a tip-topper in his day, has old Ekdal.

JENSEN.

You can see he's been through a lot.

PETTERSEN.

Yes; he was an army officer, you know.

JENSEN.

You don't say so?

PETTERSEN.

No mistake about it. But then he went into the timber trade or something of the sort. They say he once played Mr. Werle a very nasty trick. They were partners in the Höidal works at the time. Oh, I know old Ekdal well, I do. Many a nip of bitters and bottle of ale we two have drunk at Madam Eriksen's.

JENSEN.

He don't look as if he'd much to stand treat with.

PETTERSEN.

Why, bless you, Jensen, it's m e that stands treat. I always think there's no harm in being a bit civil to folks that have seen better days.

JENSEN.

Did he go bankrupt then?

PETTERSEN.

Worse than that. He went to prison.

JENSEN.

To prison!

PETTERSEN.

Or perhaps it was the Penitentiary. [*Listens.*] Sh! They're leaving the table.

The dining-room door is thrown open from within, by a couple of waiters. MRS. SÖRBY *comes out conversing with two gentlemen. Gradually the whole company follows, amongst them* WERLE. *Last come* HIALMAR EKDAL *and* GREGERS WERLE.

MRS. SÖRBY.

[*In passing, to the servant.*] Tell them to serve the coffee in the music-room, Pettersen.

PETTERSEN.

Very well, Madam.

[*She goes with the two gentlemen into the inner room, and thence out to the right.* PETTERSEN *and* JENSEN *go out the same way.*

A Flabby Gentleman.

[*To a* Thin-haired Gentleman.] Whew! What a dinner!—It was no joke to do it justice!

The Thin-haired Gentleman.

Oh, with a little good-will one can get through a lot in three hours.

The Flabby Gentleman.

Yes, but afterwards, afterwards, my dear Chamberlain!

A Third Gentleman.

I hear the coffee and maraschino are to be served in the music-room.

The Flabby Gentleman.

Bravo! Then perhaps Mrs. Sörby will play us something.

The Thin-haired Gentleman.

[*In a low voice.*] I hope Mrs. Sörby mayn't play us a tune we don't like, one of these days!

The Flabby Gentleman.

Oh no, not she! Bertha will never turn against her old friends. [*They laugh and pass into the inner room.*

Werle.

[*In a low voice, dejectedly.*] I don't think anybody noticed it, Gregers.

GREGERS.

[*Looks at him.*] Noticed what?

WERLE.

Did you not notice it either?

GREGERS.

What do you mean?

WERLE.

We were thirteen at table.

GREGERS.

Indeed? Were there thirteen of us?

WERLE.

[*Glances towards* HIALMAR EKDAL.] Our usual party is twelve. [*To the others.*] This way, gentlemen!

[WERLE *and the others, all except* HIALMAR *and* GREGERS, *go out by the back, to the right.*

HIALMAR.

[*Who has overheard the conversation.*] You ought not to have invited me, Gregers.

GREGERS.

What! Not ask my best and only friend to a party supposed to be in my honour——?

HIALMAR.

But I don't think your father likes it. You see I am quite outside his circle.

GREGERS.

So I hear. But I wanted to see you and have a talk with you, and I certainly shan't be staying long.—Ah, we two old schoolfellows have drifted far apart from each other. It must be sixteen or seventeen years since we met.

HIALMAR.

Is it so long?

GREGERS.

It is indeed. Well, how goes it with you? You look well. You have put on flesh, and grown almost stout.

HIALMAR.

Well, "stout" is scarcely the word; but I daresay I look a little more of a man than I used to.

GREGERS.

Yes, you do; your outer man is in first-rate condition.

HIALMAR.

[*In a tone of gloom.*] Ah, but the inner man! That is a very different matter, I can tell you! Of course you know of the terrible catastrophe that has befallen me and mine since last we met.

GREGERS.

[*More softly.*] How are things going with your father now?

HIALMAR.

Don't let us talk of it, old fellow. Of course my poor unhappy father lives with me. He hasn't another soul

in the world to care for him. But you can understand that this is a miserable subject for me.—Tell me, rather, how you have been getting on up at the works.

GREGERS.

I have had a delightfully lonely time of it—plenty of leisure to think and think about things. Come over here; we may as well make ourselves comfortable.

[*He seats himself in an arm-chair by the fire and draws* HIALMAR *down into another alongside of it.*

HIALMAR.

[*Sentimentally.*] After all, Gregers, I thank you for inviting me to your father's table; for I take it as a sign that you have got over your feeling against me.

GREGERS.

[*Surprised.*] How could you imagine I had any feeling against you?

HIALMAR.

You had at first, you know.

GREGERS.

How at first?

HIALMAR.

After the great misfortune. It was natural enough that you should. Your father was within an ace of being drawn into that—well, that terrible business.

GREGERS.

Why should that give me any feeling against you? Who can have put that into your head?

HIALMAR.

I know it did, Gregers; your father told me so himself.

GREGERS.

[*Starts.*] My father! Oh indeed. H'm.—Was that why you never let me hear from you?—not a single word.

HIALMAR.

Yes.

GREGERS.

Not even when you made up your mind to become a photographer?

HIALMAR.

Your father said I had better not write to you at all, about anything.

GREGERS.

[*Looking straight before him.*] Well well, perhaps he was right.—But tell me now, Hialmar: are you pretty well satisfied with your present position?

HIALMAR.

[*With a little sigh.*] Oh yes, I am; I have really no cause to complain. At first, as you may guess, I felt it a little strange. It was such a totally new state of things for me. But of course my whole circumstances were totally changed. Father's utter, irretrievable ruin,—the shame and disgrace of it, Gregers——

GREGERS.

[*Affected.*] Yes, yes; I understand.

HIALMAR.

I couldn't think of remaining at college; there wasn't a shilling to spare; on the contrary, there were debts—mainly to your father I believe——

GREGERS.

H'm——

HIALMAR.

In short, I thought it best to break, once for all, with my old surroundings and associations. It was your father that specially urged me to it; and since he interested himself so much in me——

GREGERS.

My father did?

HIALMAR.

Yes, you surely knew that, didn't you? Where do you suppose I found the money to learn photography, and to furnish a studio and make a start? All that costs a pretty penny, I can tell you.

GREGERS.

And my f a t h e r provided the money?

HIALMAR.

Yes, my dear fellow, didn't you know? I understood him to say he had written to you about it.

GREGERS.

Not a word about h i s part in the business. He must have forgotten it. Our correspondence has always been purely a business one. So it was my father that——!

HIALMAR.

Yes, certainly. He didn't wish it to be generally known; but he it was. And of course it was he, too, that put me in a position to marry. Don't you—don't you know about that either?

GREGERS.

No, I haven't heard a word of it: [*Shakes him by the arm.*] But, my dear Hialmar, I can't tell you what pleasure all this gives me—pleasure, and self-reproach. I have perhaps done my father injustice after all—in some things. This proves that he has a heart. It shows a sort of compunction——

HIALMAR.

Compunction——?

GREGERS.

Yes, yes—whatever you like to call it. Oh, I can't tell you how glad I am to hear this of father.—So you are a married man, Hialmar! That is further than I shall ever get. Well, I hope you are happy in your married life?

HIALMAR.

Yes, thoroughly happy. She is as good and capable a wife as any man could wish for. And she is by no means without culture.

GREGERS.

[*Rather surprised.*] No, of course not.

HIALMAR.

You see, life is itself an education. Her daily intercourse with me—— And then we know one or two

rather remarkable men, who come a good deal about us. I assure you, you would hardly know Gina again.

GREGERS.

Gina?

HIALMAR.

Yes; had you forgotten that her name was Gina?

GREGERS.

Whose name? I haven't the slightest idea——

HIALMAR.

Don't you remember that she used to be in service here?

GREGERS.

[*Looks at him.*] Is it Gina Hansen——?

HIALMAR.

Yes, of course it is Gina Hansen.

GREGERS.

——who kept house for us during the last year of my mother's illness?

HIALMAR.

Yes, exactly. But, my dear friend, I'm quite sure your father told you that I was married.

GREGERS.

[*Who has risen.*] Oh yes, he mentioned it; but not that—— [*Walking about the room.*] Stay—perhaps he

did—now that I think of it. My father always writes such short letters. [*Half seats himself on the arm of the chair.*] Now, tell me, Hialmar—this is interesting—how did you come to know Gina—your wife?

HIALMAR.

The simplest thing in the world. You know Gina did not stay here long; everything was so much upset at that time, owing to your mother's illness and so forth, that Gina was not equal to it all; so she gave notice and left. That was the year before your mother died—or it may have been the same year.

GREGERS.

It was the same year. I was up at the works then. But afterwards——?

HIALMAR.

Well, Gina lived at home with her mother, Madam Hansen, an excellent hard-working woman, who kept a little eating-house. She had a room to let too; a very nice comfortable room.

GREGERS.

And I suppose you were lucky enough to secure it?

HIALMAR.

Yes; in fact, it was your father that recommended it to me. So it was there, you see, that I really came to know Gina.

GREGERS.

And then you got engaged?

HIALMAR.

Yes. It doesn't take young people long to fall in love——; h'm——

GREGERS.

[*Rises and moves about a little.*] Tell me: was it after your engagement—was it then that my father—I mean was it then that you began to take up photography?

HIALMAR.

Yes, precisely. I wanted to make a start, and to set up house as soon as possible; and your father and I agreed that this photography business was the readiest way. Gina thought so too. Oh, and there was another thing in its favour, by-the-bye: it happened, luckily, that Gina had learnt to retouch.

GREGERS.

That chimed in marvellously.

HIALMAR.

[*Pleased, rises.*] Yes, didn't it? Don't you think it was a marvellous piece of luck?

GREGERS.

Oh, unquestionably. My father seems to have been almost a kind of providence for you.

HIALMAR.

[*With emotion.*] He did not forsake his old friend's son in the hour of his need. For he has a heart, you see.

MRS. SÖRBY.

[*Enters, arm-in-arm with* WERLE.] Nonsense, my dear Mr. Werle; you mustn't stop there any longer staring at all the lights. It's very bad for you.

WERLE.

[*Lets go her arm and passes his hand over his eyes.*] I daresay you are right.

[PETTERSEN *and* JENSEN *carry round refreshment trays.*]

MRS. SÖRBY.

[*To the Guests in the other room.*] This way, if you please, gentlemen. Whoever wants a glass of punch must be so good as to come in here.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

[*Comes up to* MRS. SÖRBY.] Surely, it isn't possible that you have suspended our cherished right to smoke?

MRS. SÖRBY.

Yes. No smoking here, in Mr. Werle's sanctum, Chamberlain.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN.

When did you enact these stringent amendments on the cigar law, Mrs. Sörby?

MRS. SÖRBY.

After the last dinner, Chamberlain, when certain persons permitted themselves to overstep the mark.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN.

And may one never overstep the mark a little bit, Madame Bertha? Not the least little bit?

MRS. SÖRBY.

Not in any respect whatsoever, Mr. Balle.

[*Most of the guests have assembled in the study; servants hand round glasses of punch.*

WERLE.

[*To* HIALMAR, *who is standing beside a table.*] What are you studying so intently, Ekdal?

HIALMAR.

Only an album, Mr. Werle.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN.

[*Who is wandering about.*] Ah, photographs! They are quite in your line of course.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

[*In an arm-chair.*] Haven't you brought any of your own with you?

HIALMAR.

No, I haven't.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

You ought to have; it's very good for the digestion to sit and look at pictures.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN.

And it contributes to the entertainment, you know.

THE SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN.

And all contributions are thankfully received.

MRS. SÖRBY.

The Chamberlains think that when one is invited out to dinner, one ought to exert oneself a little in return, Mr. Ekdal.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

Where one dines so well, that duty becomes a pleasure.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN.

And when it's a case of the struggle for existence, you know——

MRS. SÖRBY.

I quite agree with you!

[*They continue the conversation, with laughter and joking.*

GREGERS.

[*Softly.*] You must join in, Hialmar.

HIALMAR.

[*Writhing.*] What am I to talk about?

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

Don't you think, Mr. Werle, that Tokay may be considered one of the more wholesome sorts of wine?

WERLE.

[*By the fire.*] I can answer for the Tokay you had to-day, at any rate; it's of one of the very finest seasons. Of course you would notice that.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

Yes, it had a remarkably delicate flavour.

HIALMAR.

[*Shyly.*] Is there any difference between the seasons?

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

[*Laughs.*] Come! That's good!

WERLE.

[*Smiles.*] It really doesn't pay to set fine wine before you.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN.

Tokay is like photographs, Mr. Ekdal: they both need sunshine. Am I not right?

HIALMAR.

Yes, light is important no doubt.

MRS. SÖRBY.

And it's exactly the same with Chamberlains—they, too, depend very much on sunshine,[1] as the saying is.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN.

Oh fie! That's a very threadbare sarcasm!

[1] The "sunshine" of Court favour.

THE SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN.

Mrs. Sörby is coming out——

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

——and at our expense, too. [*Holds up his finger reprovingly.*] Oh, Madame Bertha, Madame Bertha!

MRS. SÖRBY.

Yes, and there's not the least doubt that the seasons differ greatly. The old vintages are the finest.

THE SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN.

Do you reckon me among the old vintages?

MRS. SÖRBY.

Oh, far from it.

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN.

There now! But me, dear Mrs. Sörby——?

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

Yes, and me? What vintage should you say that we belong to?

MRS. SÖRBY.

Why, to the sweet vintages, gentlemen.

[*She sips a glass of punch. The gentlemen laugh and flirt with her.*

WERLE.

Mrs. Sörby can always find a loop-hole—when she wants to. Fill your glasses, gentlemen! Pettersen, will

you see to it——! Gregers, suppose we have a glass together. [GREGERS *does not move.*] Won't you join us, Ekdal? I found no opportunity of drinking with you at table.

[GRÅBERG, *the Bookkeeper, looks in at the baize door.*

GRÅBERG.

Excuse me, sir, but I can't get out.

WERLE.

Have you been locked in again?

GRÅBERG.

Yes, and Flakstad has carried off the keys.

WERLE.

Well, you can pass out this way.

GRÅBERG.

But there's some one else——

WERLE.

All right; come through, both of you. Don't be afraid.

[GRÅBERG *and* OLD EKDAL *come out of the office.*

WERLE.

[*Involuntarily.*] Ugh!

[*The laughter and talk among the Guests cease.* HIALMAR *starts at the sight of his father, puts down his glass, and turns towards the fireplace.*

EKDAL.

[*Does not look up, but makes little bows to both sides as he passes, murmuring.*] Beg pardon, come the wrong way. Door locked—door locked. Beg pardon.

[*He and* GRÅBERG *go out by the back, to the right.*

WERLE.

[*Between his teeth.*] That idiot Gråberg!

GREGERS.

[*Open-mouthed and staring, to* HIALMAR.] Why surely that wasn't——!

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

What's the matter? Who was it?

GREGERS.

Oh, nobody, only the bookkeeper and some one with him.

THE SHORT-SIGHTED GENTLEMAN.

[*To* HIALMAR.] Did y o u know that man?

HIALMAR.

I don't know—I didn't notice——

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

What the deuce has come over every one?

[*He joins another group who are talking softly.*

MRS. SÖRBY.

[*Whispers to the Servant.*] Give him something to take with him;—something good, mind!

PETTERSEN.

[*Nods.*] I'll see to it. [*Goes out.*

GREGERS.

[*Softly and with emotion, to* HIALMAR.] So that was really he!

HIALMAR.

Yes.

GREGERS.

And you could stand there and deny that you knew him!

HIALMAR.

[*Whispers vehemently.*] But how could I——!

GREGERS.

——acknowledge your own father?

HIALMAR.

[*With pain.*] Oh, if you were in my place——

[*The conversation amongst the Guests, which has been carried on in a low tone, now swells into constrained joviality.*]

THE THIN-HAIRED GENTLEMAN.

[*Approaching* HIALMAR *and* GREGERS *in a friendly manner.*] Aha! Reviving old college memories, eh?

Don't you smoke, Mr. Ekdal? May I give you a light? Oh, by-the-bye, we mustn't——

HIALMAR.

No, thank you, I won't——

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

Haven't you a nice little poem you could recite to us, Mr. Ekdal? You used to recite so charmingly.

HIALMAR.

I am sorry I can't remember anything.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

Oh, that's a pity. Well, what shall we do, Balle?

[*Both Gentlemen move away and pass into the other room.*

HIALMAR.

[*Gloomily.*] Gregers—I am going! When a man has felt the crushing hand of Fate, you see—— Say good-bye to your father for me.

GREGERS.

Yes, yes. Are you going straight home?

HIALMAR.

Yes. Why?

GREGERS.

Oh, because I may perhaps look in on you later.

HIALMAR.

No, you mustn't do that. You must not come to my home. Mine is a melancholy abode, Gregers; especially after a splendid banquet like this. We can always arrange to meet somewhere in the town.

MRS. SÖRBY.

[*Who has quietly approached.*] Are you going, Ekdal?

HIALMAR.

Yes.

MRS. SÖRBY.

Remember me to Gina.

HIALMAR.

Thanks.

MRS. SÖRBY.

And say I am coming up to see her one of these days.

HIALMAR.

Yes, thank you. [*To* GREGERS.] Stay here; I will slip out unobserved.

[*He saunters away, then into the other room, and so out to the right.*

MRS. SÖRBY.

[*Softly to the Servant, who has come back.*] Well, did you give the old man something?

PETTERSEN.

Yes; I sent him off with a bottle of cognac.

MRS. SÖRBY.

Oh, you might have thought of something better than that.

PETTERSEN.

Oh no, Mrs. Sörby; cognac is what he likes best in the world.

THE FLABBY GENTLEMAN.

[*In the doorway with a sheet of music in his hand.*] Shall we play a duet, Mrs. Sörby?

MRS. SÖRBY.

Yes, suppose we do.

THE GUESTS.

Bravo, bravo!

[*She goes with all the Guests through the back room, out to the right.* GREGERS *remains standing by the fire.* WERLE *is looking for something on the writing-table, and appears to wish that* GREGERS *would go; as* GREGERS *does not move,* WERLE *goes towards the door.*

GREGERS.

Father, won't you stay a moment?

WERLE.

[*Stops.*] What is it?

GREGERS.

I must have a word with you.

WERLE.

Can it not wait till we are alone?

GREGERS.

No, it cannot; for perhaps we shall never be alone together.

WERLE.

[*Drawing nearer.*] What do you mean by that?

[*During what follows, the pianoforte is faintly heard from the distant music-room.*

GREGERS.

How has that family been allowed to go so miserably to the wall?

WERLE.

You mean the Ekdals, I suppose.

GREGERS.

Yes, I mean the Ekdals. Lieutenant Ekdal was once so closely associated with you.

WERLE.

Much too closely; I have felt that to my cost for many a year. It is thanks to him that I—yes *I*—have had a kind of slur cast upon my reputation.

GREGERS.

[*Softly.*] Are you sure that h e alone was to blame?

WERLE.

Who else do you suppose——?

GREGERS.

You and he acted together in that affair of the forests——

WERLE.

But was it not Ekdal that drew the map of the tracts we had bought—that fraudulent map! It was he who felled all that timber illegally on Government ground. In fact, the whole management was in his hands. I was quite in the dark as to what Lieutenant Ekdal was doing.

GREGERS.

Lieutenant Ekdal himself seems to have been very much in the dark as to what he was doing.

WERLE.

That may be. But the fact remains that he was found guilty and I acquitted.

GREGERS.

Yes, I know that nothing was proved against you.

WERLE.

Acquittal is acquittal. Why do you rake up these old miseries that turned my hair grey before its time? Is that the sort of thing you have been brooding over up there, all these years? I can assure you, Gregers, here in the town the whole story has been forgotten long ago —so far as *I* am concerned.

GREGERS.

But that unhappy Ekdal family.

WERLE.

What would you have had me do for the people? When Ekdal came out of prison he was a broken-down being, past all help. There are people in the world who dive to the bottom the moment they get a couple of slugs in their body, and never come to the surface again. You may take my word for it, Gregers, I have done all I could without positively laying myself open to all sorts of suspicion and gossip——

GREGERS.

Suspicion——? Oh, I see.

WERLE.

I have given Ekdal copying to do for the office, and I pay him far, far more for it than his work is worth——

GREGERS.

[*Without looking at him.*] H'm; t h a t I don't doubt

WERLE.

You laugh? Do you think I am not telling you the truth? Well, I certainly can't refer you to my books, for I never enter payments of that sort.

GREGERS.

[*Smiles coldly.*] No, there are certain payments it is best to keep no account of.

WERLE.

[*Taken aback.*] What do you mean by t h a t?

GREGERS.

[*Mustering up courage.*] Have you entered what it cost you to have Hialmar Ekdal taught photography?

WERLE.

I? How "entered" it?

GREGERS.

I have learnt that it was you who paid for his training. And I have learnt, too, that it was you who enabled him to set up house so comfortably.

WERLE.

Well, and yet you talk as though I had done nothing for the Ekdals! I can assure you these people have cost me enough in all conscience.

GREGERS

Have you entered any of these expenses in your books?

WERLE.

Why do you ask?

GREGERS.

Oh, I have my reasons. Now tell me: when you interested yourself so warmly in your old friend's son—it was just before his marriage, was it not?

WERLE.

Why, deuce take it—after all these years, how can I——?

GREGERS.

You wrote me a letter about that time—a business letter, of course; and in a postscript you mentioned—quite briefly—that Hialmar Ekdal had married a Miss Hansen.

WERLE.

Yes, that was quite right. That was her name.

GREGERS.

But you did not mention that this Miss Hansen was Gina Hansen—our former housekeeper.

WERLE.

[*With a forced laugh of derision.*] No; to tell the truth, it didn't occur to me that you were so particularly interested in our former housekeeper.

GREGERS.

No more I was. But [*lowers his voice*] there were others in this house who w e r e particularly interested in her.

WERLE.

What do you mean by that? [*Flaring up.*] You are not alluding to me, I hope?

GREGERS.

[*Softly but firmly.*] Yes, I am alluding to you.

WERLE.

And you dare——! You presume to——! How can that ungrateful hound—that photographer fellow—how dare he go making such insinuations!

GREGERS.

Hialmar has never breathed a word about this. I don't believe he has the faintest suspicion of such a thing.

WERLE.

Then where have you got it from? Who can have put such notions in your head?

GREGERS.

My poor unhappy mother told me; and that the very last time I saw her.

WERLE.

Your mother! I might have known as much! You and she—you always held together. It was she who turned you against me, from the first.

GREGERS.

No, it was all that she had to suffer and submit to, until she broke down and came to such a pitiful end.

WERLE.

Oh, she had nothing to suffer or submit to; not more than most people, at all events. But there's no getting on with morbid, overstrained creatures—that I have learnt to my cost.—And you could go on nursing such a

suspicion—burrowing into all sorts of old rumours and slanders against your own father! I must say, Gregers, I really think that at your age you might find something more useful to do.

GREGERS.

Yes, it is high time.

WERLE.

Then perhaps your mind would be easier than it seems to be now. What can be your object in remaining up at the works, year out and year in, drudging away like a common clerk, and not drawing a farthing more than the ordinary monthly wage? It is downright folly.

GREGERS.

Ah, if I were only sure of t h a t.

WERLE.

I understand you well enough. You want to be independent; you won't be beholden to me for anything. Well, now there happens to be an opportunity for you to become independent, your own master in everything.

GREGERS.

Indeed? In what way——?

WERLE.

When I wrote you insisting on your coming to town at once—h'm——

GREGERS.

Yes, what is it you really want of me? I have been waiting all day to know.

WERLE.

I want to propose that you should enter the firm, as partner.

GREGERS.

I? Join your firm? As partner?

WERLE.

Yes. It would not involve our being constantly together. You could take over the business here in town, and I should move up to the works.

GREGERS.

You would?

WERLE.

The fact is, I am not so fit for work as I once was. I am obliged to spare my eyes, Gregers; they have begun to trouble me.

GREGERS.

They have always been weak.

WERLE.

Not as they are now. And besides, circumstances might possibly make it desirable for me to live up there—for a time, at any rate.

GREGERS.

That is certainly quite a new idea to me.

WERLE.

Listen, Gregers: there are many things that stand between us; but we are father and son after all. We ought

surely to be able to come to some sort of understanding with each other.

GREGERS.

Outwardly, you mean, of course?

WERLE.

Well, even that would be something. Think it over, Gregers. Don't you think it ought to be possible? Eh?

GREGERS.

[*Looking at him coldly.*] There is something behind all this.

WERLE.

How so?

GREGERS.

You want to make use of me in some way.

WERLE.

In such a close relationship as ours, the one can always be useful to the other.

GREGERS.

Yes, so people say.

WERLE.

I want very much to have you at home with me for a time. I am a lonely man, Gregers; I have always felt lonely, all my life through; but most of all now that I am getting up in years. I feel the need of some one about me——

GREGERS.

You have Mrs. Sörby.

WERLE.

Yes, I have her; and she has become, I may say, almost indispensable to me. She is lively and even-tempered; she brightens up the house; and that is a very great thing for me.

GREGERS.

Well then, you have everything just as you wish it.

WERLE.

Yes, but I am afraid it can't last. A woman so situated may easily find herself in a false position, in the eyes of the world. For that matter it does a man no good, either.

GREGERS.

Oh, when a man gives such dinners as you give, he can risk a great deal.

WERLE.

Yes, but how about the woman, Gregers? I fear she won't accept the situation much longer; and even if she did—even if, out of attachment to me, she were to take her chance of gossip and scandal and all that——? Do you think, Gregers—you with your strong sense of justice——

GREGERS.

[*Interrupts him.*] Tell me in one word: are you thinking of marrying her?

WERLE.

Suppose I were thinking of it? What then?

GREGERS.

That's what I say: what then?

WERLE.

Should you be inflexibly opposed to it?

GREGERS.

Not at all. Not by any means.

WERLE.

I was not sure whether your devotion to your mother's memory——

GREGERS.

I am not overstrained.

WERLE.

Well, whatever you may or may not be, at all events you have lifted a great weight from my mind. I am extremely pleased that I can reckon on your concurrence in this matter.

GREGERS.

[*Looking intently at him.*] Now I see the use you want to put me to.

WERLE.

Use to put you to? What an expression!

GREGERS.

Oh, don't let us be nice in our choice of words—not when we are alone together, at any rate. [*With a short laugh.*] Well well! So this is what made it absolutely essential that I should come to town in person. For the sake of Mrs. Sörby, we are to get up a pretence at family life in the house—a tableau of filial affection! That will be something new indeed.

WERLE.

How dare you speak in that tone!

GREGERS.

Was there ever any family life here? Never since I can remember. But now, forsooth, your plans demand something of the sort. No doubt it will have an excellent effect when it is reported that the son has hastened home, on the wings of filial piety, to the grey-haired father's wedding-feast. What will then remain of all the rumours as to the wrongs the poor dead mother had to submit to? Not a vestige. Her son annihilates them at one stroke.

WERLE.

Gregers—I believe there is no one in the world you detest as you do me.

GREGERS.

[*Softly.*] I have seen you at too close quarters.

WERLE.

You have seen me with your mother's eyes. [*Lowers his voice a little.*] But you should remember that her eyes were—clouded now and then.

GREGERS.

[*Quivering.*] I see what you are hinting at. But who was to blame for mother's unfortunate weakness? Why you, and all those——! The last of them was this woman that you palmed off upon Hialmar Ekdal, when you were—— Ugh!

WERLE.

[*Shrugs his shoulders.*] Word for word as if it were your mother speaking!

GREGERS.

[*Without heeding.*] And there he is now, with his great, confiding, childlike mind, compassed about with all this treachery—living under the same roof with such a creature, and never dreaming that what he calls his home is built upon a lie! [*Comes a step nearer.*] When I look back upon your past, I seem to see a battle-field with shattered lives on every hand.

WERLE.

I begin to think the chasm that divides us is too wide.

GREGERS.

[*Bowing, with self-command.*] So I have observed; and therefore I take my hat and go.

WERLE.

You are going! Out of the house?

GREGERS.

Yes. For at last I see my mission in life.

WERLE.

What mission?

GREGERS.

You would only laugh if I told you.

WERLE.

A lonely man doesn't laugh so easily, Gregers.

GREGERS.

[*Pointing towards the background.*] Look, father,—the Chamberlains are playing blind-man's-buff with Mrs. Sörby.—Good-night and good-bye.

[*He goes out by the back to the right. Sounds of laughter and merriment from the Company, who are now visible in the outer room.*

WERLE.

[*Muttering contemptuously after* GREGERS.] Ha——! Poor wretch—and he says he is not overstrained!

ACT SECOND

HIALMAR EKDAL'S *studio, a good-sized room, evidently in the top storey of the building. On the right, a sloping roof of large panes of glass, half-covered by a blue curtain. In the right-hand corner, at the back, the entrance door; farther forward, on the same side, a door leading to the sitting-room. Two doors on the opposite side, and between them an iron stove. At the back, a wide double sliding-door. The studio is plainly but comfortably fitted up and furnished. Between the doors on the right, standing out a little from the wall, a sofa with a table and some chairs; on the table a lighted lamp with a shade; beside the stove an old arm-chair. Photographic instruments and apparatus of different kinds lying about the room. Against the back wall, to the left of the double door, stands a bookcase containing a few books, boxes, and bottles of chemicals, instruments, tools, and other objects. Photographs and small articles, such as camel's-hair brushes, paper, and so forth, lie on the table.*

GINA EKDAL *sits on a chair by the table, sewing.* HEDVIG *is sitting on the sofa, with her hands shading her eyes and her thumbs in her ears, reading a book.*

GINA.

[*Glances once or twice at* HEDVIG, *as if with secret anxiety; then says:*] Hedvig!

HEDVIG.

[*Does not hear.*]

GINA.

[*Repeats more loudly.*] Hedvig!

HEDVIG.

[*Takes away her hands and looks up.*] Yes, mother?

GINA.

Hedvig dear, you mustn't sit reading any longer now.

HEDVIG.

Oh mother, mayn't I read a little more? Just a little bit?

GINA.

No no, you must put away your book now. Father doesn't like it; he never reads hisself in the evening.

HEDVIG.

[*Shuts the book.*] No, father doesn't care much about reading.

GINA.

[*Puts aside her sewing and takes up a lead pencil and a little account-book from the table.*] Can you remember how much we paid for the butter to-day?

HEDVIG.

It was one crown sixty-five.

GINA.

That's right. [*Puts it down.*] It's terrible what a lot of butter we get through in this house. Then there was

the smoked sausage, and the cheese—let me see—[*Writes*] —and the ham—[*Adds up.*] Yes, that makes just——

HEDVIG.

And then the beer.

GINA.

Yes, to be sure. [*Writes.*] How it do mount up! But we can't manage with no less.

HEDVIG.

And then you and I didn't need anything hot for dinner, as father was out.

GINA.

No; that was so much to the good. And then I took eight crowns fifty for the photographs.

HEDVIG.

Really! So much as that?

GINA.

Exactly eight crowns fifty.

[*Silence.* GINA *takes up her sewing again,* HEDVIG *takes paper and pencil and begins to draw, shading her eyes with her left hand.*

HEDVIG.

Isn't it jolly to think that father is at Mr. Werle's big dinner-party?

GINA.

You know he's not really Mr. Werle's guest. It was the son invited him. [*After a pause.*] We have nothing to do with that Mr. Werle.

HEDVIG.

I'm longing for father to come home. He promised to ask Mrs. Sörby for something nice for me.

GINA.

Yes, there's plenty of good things going in that house, I can tell you.

HEDVIG.

[*Goes on drawing.*] And I believe I'm a little hungry too.

[OLD EKDAL, *with the paper parcel under his arm and another parcel in his coat pocket, comes in by the entrance door.*

GINA.

How late you are to-day, grandfather!

EKDAL.

They had locked the office door. Had to wait in Gråberg's room. And then they let me through—h'm.

HEDVIG.

Did you get some more copying to do, grandfather?

EKDAL.

This whole packet. Just look.

GINA.

That's capital.

HEDVIG.

And you have another parcel in your pocket.

EKDAL.

Eh? Oh never mind, that's nothing. [*Puts his stick away in a corner.*] This work will keep me going a long time, Gina. [*Opens one of the sliding-doors in the back wall a little.*] Hush! [*Peeps into the room for a moment, then pushes the door carefully to again.*] Hee-hee! They're fast asleep, all the lot of them. And she's gone into the basket herself. Hee-hee!

HEDVIG.

Are you sure she isn't cold in that basket, grandfather?

EKDAL.

Not a bit of it! Cold? With all that straw? [*Goes towards the farther door on the left.*] There are matches in here, I suppose.

GINA.

The matches is on the drawers.

[EKDAL *goes into his room.*

HEDVIG.

It's nice that grandfather has got all that copying.

GINA.

Yes, poor old father; it means a bit of pocket-money for him.

HEDVIG.

And he won't be able to sit the whole forenoon down at that horrid Madam Eriksen's.

GINA.

No more he won't. [*Short silence.*

HEDVIG.

Do you suppose they are still at the dinner-table?

GINA.

Goodness knows; as like as not.

HEDVIG.

Think of all the delicious things father is having to eat! I'm certain he'll be in splendid spirits when he comes. Don't you think so, mother?

GINA.

Yes; and if only we could tell him that we'd got the room let——

HEDVIG.

But we don't need that this evening.

GINA.

Oh, we'd be none the worse of it, I can tell you. It's no use to us as it is.

HEDVIG.

I mean we don't need it this evening, for father will be in a good humour at any rate. It is best to keep the letting of the room for another time.

GINA.

[*Looks across at her.*] You like having some good news to tell father when he comes home in the evening?

HEDVIG.

Yes; for then things are pleasanter somehow.

GINA.

[*Thinking to herself.*] Yes, yes, there's something in that.

[OLD EKDAL *comes in again and is going out by the foremost door to the left.*

GINA.

[*Half turning in her chair.*] Do you want something out of the kitchen, grandfather?

EKDAL.

Yes, yes, I do. Don't you trouble. [*Goes out.*

GINA.

He's not poking away at the fire, is he? [*Waits a moment.*] Hedvig, go and see what he's about.

[EKDAL *comes in again with a small jug of steaming hot water.*

HEDVIG.

Have you been getting some hot water, grandfather?

EKDAL.

Yes, hot water. Want it for something. Want to write, and the ink has got as thick as porridge—h'm.

GINA.

But you'd best have your supper, first, grandfather. It's laid in there.

EKDAL.

Can't be bothered with supper, Gina. Very busy, I tell you. No one's to come to my room. No one—h'm.

[*He goes into his room;* GINA *and* HEDVIG *look at each other.*

GINA.

[*Softly.*] Can you imagine where he's got money from?

HEDVIG.

From Gråberg, perhaps.

GINA.

Not a bit of it. Gråberg always sends the money to me.

HEDVIG.

Then he must have got a bottle on credit somewhere.

GINA.

Poor grandfather, who'd give him credit?

HIALMAR EKDAL, *in an overcoat and grey felt hat, comes in from the right.*

GINA.

[*Throws down her sewing and rises.*] Why, Ekdal. Is that you already?

HEDVIG.

[*At the same time jumping up.*] Fancy your coming so soon, father!

HIALMAR.

[*Taking off his hat.*] Yes, most of the people were coming away.

HEDVIG.

So early?

HIALMAR.

Yes, it was a dinner-party, you know.

[*Is taking off his overcoat.*

GINA.

Let me help you.

HEDVIG.

Me too.

[*They draw off his coat;* GINA *hangs it up on the back wall.*

HEDVIG.

Were there many people there, father?

HIALMAR.

Oh no, not many. We were about twelve or fourteen at table.

GINA.

And you had some talk with them all?

HIALMAR.

Oh yes, a little; but Gregers took me up most of the time.

GINA.

Is Gregers as ugly as ever?

HIALMAR.

Well, he's not very much to look at. Hasn't the old man come home?

HEDVIG.

Yes, grandfather is in his room, writing.

HIALMAR.

Did he say anything?

GINA.

No, what should he say?

HIALMAR.

Didn't he say anything about——? I heard something about his having been with Gråberg. I'll go in and see him for a moment.

GINA.

No, no, better not.

HIALMAR.

Why not? Did he say he didn't want me to go in?

GINA.

I don't think he wants to see n o b o d y this evening——

HEDVIG.

[*Making signs.*] H'm—h'm!

GINA.

[*Not noticing.*] ——he has been in to fetch hot water——

HIALMAR.

Aha! Then he's——

GINA.

Yes, I suppose so.

HIALMAR.

Oh God! my poor old white-haired father!—Well, well; there let him sit and get all the enjoyment he can.

[OLD EKDAL, *in an indoor coat and with a lighted pipe, comes from his room.*

EKDAL.

Got home? Thought it was you I heard talking.

HIALMAR.

Yes, I have just come.

EKDAL.

You didn't see me, did you?

HIALMAR.

No; but they told me you had passed through—so I thought I would follow you.

EKDAL.

H'm, good of you, Hialmar.—Who were they, all those fellows?

HIALMAR.

Oh, all sorts of people. There was Chamberlain Flor, and Chamberlain Balle, and Chamberlain Kaspersen, and Chamberlain—this, that, and the other—I don't know who all——

EKDAL.

[*Nodding.*] Hear that, Gina! Chamberlains every one of them!

GINA.

Yes, I hear as they're terrible genteel in that house nowadays.

HEDVIG.

Did the Chamberlains sing, father? Or did they read aloud?

HIALMAR.

No, they only talked nonsense. They wanted me to recite something for them; but I knew better than that.

EKDAL.

You weren't to be persuaded, eh?

GINA.

Oh, you might have done it.

HIALMAR.

No; one mustn't be at everybody's beck and call. [*Walks about the room.*] That's not my way, at any rate.

EKDAL.

No no; Hialmar's not to be had for the asking, he isn't.

HIALMAR.

I don't see why *I* should bother myself to entertain people on the rare occasions when I go into society. Let the others exert themselves. These fellows go from one great dinner-table to the next and gorge and guzzle day out and day in. It's for them to bestir themselves and do something in return for all the good feeding they get.

GINA.

But you didn't say that?

HIALMAR.

[*Humming.*] Ho-ho-ho——; faith, I gave them a bit of my mind.

EKDAL.

Not the Chamberlains?

HIALMAR.

Oh, why not? [*Lightly.*] After that, we had a little discussion about Tokay.

EKDAL.

Tokay! There's a fine wine for you!

HIALMAR.

[*Comes to a standstill.*] It m a y be a fine wine. But of course you know the vintages differ; it all depends on how much sunshine the grapes have had.

GINA.

Why, you know everything, Ekdal.

EKDAL.

And did they dispute that?

HIALMAR.

They tried to; but they were requested to observe that it was just the same with Chamberlains—that with them, too, different batches were of different qualities.

GINA.

What things you do think of!

EKDAL.

Hee-hee! So they got that in their pipes too?

HIALMAR.

Right in their teeth.

EKDAL.

Do you hear that, Gina? He said it right in the very teeth of all the Chamberlains.

GINA.

Fancy——! Right in their teeth!

HIALMAR.

Yes, but I don't want it talked about. One doesn't speak of such things. The whole affair passed off quite amicably of course. They were nice, genial fellows; I didn't want to wound them—not I!

EKDAL.

Right in their teeth, though——!

HEDVIG.

[*Caressingly.*] How nice it is to see you in a dress-coat! It suits you so well, father.

HIALMAR.

Yes, don't you think so? And this one really sits to perfection. It fits almost as if it had been made for me;—a little tight in the arm-holes perhaps;—help me, Hedvig. [*Takes off the coat.*] I think I'll put on my jacket. Where is my jacket, Gina?

GINA.

Here it is. [*Brings the jacket and helps him.*

HIALMAR.

That's it! Don't forget to send the coat back to Molvik first thing to-morrow morning.

GINA.

[*Laying it away.*] I'll be sure and see to it.

HIALMAR.

[*Stretching himself.*] After all, there's a more homely feeling about this. A free-and-easy indoor costume suits my whole personality better. Don't you think so, Hedvig?

HEDVIG.

Yes, father.

HIALMAR.

When I loosen my necktie into a pair of flowing ends —like this—eh?

HEDVIG.

Yes, that goes so well with your moustache and the sweep of your curls.

HIALMAR.

I should not call them curls exactly; I should rather say locks.

HEDVIG.

Yes, they are too big for curls.

HIALMAR.

Locks describes them better.

HEDVIG.

[*After a pause, twitching his jacket.*] Father.

HIALMAR.

Well, what is it?

HEDVIG.

Oh, you know very well.

HIALMAR.

No, really I don't——

HEDVIG.

[*Half laughing, half whimpering.*] Oh yes, father; now don't tease me any longer!

HIALMAR.

Why, what do you mean?

HEDVIG.

[*Shaking him.*] Oh what nonsense; come, where are they, father? All the good things you promised me, you know?

HIALMAR.

Oh—if I haven't forgotten all about them!

HEDVIG.

Now you're only teasing me, father! Oh, it's too bad of you! Where have you put them?

HIALMAR.

No, I positively forgot to get anything. But wait a little! I have something else for you, Hedvig.

[*Goes and searches in the pockets of the coat.*

HEDVIG.

[*Skipping and clapping her hands.*] Oh mother, mother!

GINA.

There, you see; if you only give him time——

HIALMAR.

[*With a paper.*] Look, here it is.

HEDVIG.

That? Why, that's only a paper.

HIALMAR.

That is the bill of fare, my dear; the whole bill of fare. Here you see: "Menu"—that means bill of fare.

HEDVIG.

Haven't you anything else?

HIALMAR.

I forgot the other things, I tell you. But you may take my word for it, these dainties are very unsatisfying. Sit down at the table and read the bill of fare, and then I'll describe to you how the dishes taste. Here you are, Hedvig.

HEDVIG.

[*Gulping down her tears.*] Thank you.

[*She seats herself, but does not read;* GINA *makes signs to her;* HIALMAR *notices it.*

HIALMAR.

[*Pacing up and down the room.*] It's monstrous what absurd things the father of a family is expected to think of; and if he forgets the smallest trifle, he is treated to sour faces at once. Well, well, one gets used to that too. [*Stops near the stove, by the old man's chair.*] Have you peeped in there this evening, father?

EKDAL.

Yes, to be sure I have. She's gone into the basket.

HIALMAR.

Ah, she h a s gone into the basket. Then she's beginning to get used to it.

EKDAL.

Yes; just as I prophesied. But you know there are still a few little things——

HIALMAR.

A few improvements, yes.

EKDAL.

They've g o t to be made, you know.

HIALMAR.

Yes, let us have a talk about the improvements, father. Come, let us sit on the sofa.

EKDAL.

All right. H'm—think I'll just fill my pipe first. Must clean it out, too. H'm. [*He goes into his room.*

GINA.

[*Smiling to* HIALMAR.] His pipe!

HIALMAR.

Oh yes, yes, Gina; let him alone—the poor shipwrecked old man.—Yes, these improvements—we had better get them out of hand to-morrow.

GINA.

You'll hardly have time to-morrow, Ekdal.

HEDVIG.

[*Interposing.*] Oh yes he will, mother!

GINA.

——for remember them prints that has to be retouched; they've sent for them time after time.

HIALMAR.

There now! those prints again! I shall get them finished all right! Have any new orders come in?

GINA.

No, worse luck; to-morrow I have nothing but those two sittings, you know.

HIALMAR.

Nothing else? Oh no, if people won't set about things with a will——

GINA.

But what more can I do? Don't I advertise in the papers as much as we can afford?

HIALMAR.

Yes, the papers, the papers; you see how much good they do. And I suppose no one has been to look at the room either?

GINA.

No, not yet.

HIALMAR.

That was only to be expected. If people won't keep their eyes open——. Nothing can be done without a real effort, Gina!

HEDVIG.

[*Going towards him.*] Shall I fetch you the flute, father?

HIALMAR.

No; no flute for me; *I* want no pleasures in this world. [*Pacing about.*] Yes, indeed I will work to-morrow; you shall see if I don't. You may be sure I shall work as long as my strength holds out.

GINA.

But my dear good Ekdal, I didn't mean it in t h a t way.

HEDVIG.

Father, mayn't I bring in a bottle of beer?

HIALMAR.

No, certainly not. I require nothing, nothing—— [*Comes to a standstill.*] Beer? Was it beer you were talking about?

HEDVIG.

[*Cheerfully.*] Yes, father; beautiful fresh beer.

HIALMAR.

Well—since you insist upon it, you may bring in a bottle.

GINA.

Yes, do; and we'll be nice and cosy.

[HEDVIG *runs towards the kitchen door.*

HIALMAR.

[*By the stove, stops her, looks at her, puts his arm round her neck and presses her to him.*] Hedvig, Hedvig!

HEDVIG.

[*With tears of joy.*] My dear, kind father!

HIALMAR.

No, don't call me that. Here have I been feasting at the rich man's table,—battening at the groaning board——! And I couldn't even——!

GINA.

[*Sitting at the table.*] Oh nonsense, nonsense, Ekdal.

HIALMAR.

It's not nonsense! And yet you mustn't be too hard upon me. You know that I love you for all that.

HEDVIG.

[*Throwing her arms round him.*] And we love you, oh so dearly, father!

HIALMAR.

And if I am unreasonable once in a while,—why then —you must remember that I am a man beset by a host of cares. There, there! [*Dries his eyes.*] No beer at such a moment as this. Give me the flute.

[HEDVIG *runs to the bookcase and fetches it.*

HIALMAR.

Thanks! That's right. With my flute in my hand and you two at my side—ah——!

[HEDVIG *seats herself at the table near* GINA; HIALMAR *paces backwards and forwards, pipes up vigorously, and plays a Bohemian peasant dance, but in a slow plaintive tempo, and with sentimental expression.*

HIALMAR.

[*Breaking off the melody, holds out his left hand to* GINA, *and says with emotion:*] Our roof may be poor and humble, Gina; but it is home. And with all my heart I say: here dwells my happiness.

[*He begins to play again; almost immediately after, a knocking is heard at the entrance door.*

GINA.

[*Rising.*] Hush, Ekdal,—I think there's some one at the door.

HIALMAR.

[*Laying the flute on the bookcase.*] There! Again!

[GINA *goes and opens the door.*

GREGERS WERLE.

[*In the passage.*] Excuse me——

GINA.

[*Starting back slightly.*] Oh!

GREGERS.

——does not Mr. Ekdal, the photographer, live here?

GINA.

Yes, he does.

HIALMAR.

[*Going towards the door.*] Gregers! You here after all? Well, come in then.

GREGERS.

[*Coming in.*] I told you I would come and look you up.

HIALMAR.

But this evening——? Have you left the party?

GREGERS.

I have left both the party and my father's house.—Good evening, Mrs. Ekdal. I don't know whether you recognise me?

GINA.

Oh yes; it's not difficult to know young Mr. Werle again.

GREGERS.

No, I am like my mother; and no doubt you remember her.

HIALMAR.

Left your father's house, did you say?

GREGERS.

Yes, I have gone to a hotel.

HIALMAR.

Indeed. Well, since you're here, take off your coat and sit down.

GREGERS.

Thanks.

[*He takes off his overcoat. He is now dressed in a plain grey suit of a countrified cut.*

HIALMAR.

Here, on the sofa. Make yourself comfortable.

[GREGERS *seats himself on the sofa;* HIALMAR *takes a chair at the table.*

GREGERS.

[*Looking around him.*] So these are your quarters, Hialmar—this is your home.

HIALMAR.

This is the studio, as you see——

GINA.

But it's the largest of our rooms, so we generally sit here.

HIALMAR.

We used to live in a better place; but this flat has one great advantage: there are such capital outer rooms——

GINA.

And we have a room on the other side of the passage that we can let.

GREGERS.

[*To* HIALMAR.] Ah—so you have lodgers too?

HIALMAR.

No, not yet. They're not so easy to find, you see; you have to keep your eyes open. [*To* HEDVIG.] What about that beer, eh?

[HEDVIG *nods and goes out into the kitchen.*

GREGERS.

So that is your daughter?

HIALMAR.

Yes, that is Hedvig.

GREGERS.

And she is your only child?

HIALMAR.

Yes, the only one. She is the joy of our lives, and—[*lowering his voice*]—at the same time our deepest sorrow, Gregers.

GREGERS.

What do you mean?

HIALMAR.

She is in serious danger of losing her eyesight.

GREGERS.

Becoming blind?

HIALMAR.

Yes. Only the first symptoms have appeared as yet, and she may not feel it much for some time. But the doctor has warned us. It is coming, inexorably.

GREGERS.

What a terrible misfortune! How do you account for it?

HIALMAR.

[*Sighs.*] Hereditary, no doubt.

GREGERS.

[*Starting.*] Hereditary?

GINA.

Ekdal's mother had weak eyes.

HIALMAR.

Yes, so my father says; I can't remember her.

GREGERS.

Poor child! And how does she take it?

HIALMAR.

Oh, you can imagine we haven't the heart to tell her of it. She dreams of no danger. Gay and careless and chirping like a little bird, she flutters onward into a life of endless night. [*Overcome.*] Oh, it is cruelly hard on me, Gregers.

[HEDVIG *brings a tray with beer and glasses, which she sets upon the table.*

HIALMAR.

[*Stroking her hair.*] Thanks, thanks, Hedvig.

[HEDVIG *puts her arm round his neck and whispers in his ear.*

HIALMAR.

No, no bread and butter just now. [*Looks up.*] But perhaps you would like some, Gregers.

GREGERS.

[*With a gesture of refusal.*] No, no thank you.

HIALMAR.

[*Still melancholy.*] Well, you can bring in a little all the same. If you have a crust, that is all I want. And plenty of butter on it, mind.

[HEDVIG *nods gaily and goes out into the kitchen again.*

GREGERS.

[*Who has been following her with his eyes.*] She seems quite strong and healthy otherwise.

GINA.

Yes. In other ways there's nothing amiss with her, thank goodness.

GREGERS.

She promises to be very like you, Mrs. Ekdal. How old is she now?

GINA.

Hedvig is close on fourteen; her birthday is the day after to-morrow.

GREGERS.

She is pretty tall for her age, then.

GINA.

Yes, she's shot up wonderful this last year.

GREGERS.

It makes one realise one's own age to see these young people growing up.—How long is it now since you were married?

GINA.

We've been married—let me see—just on fifteen years.

GREGERS.

Is it so long as that?

GINA.

[*Becomes attentive; looks at him.*] Yes, it is indeed.

HIALMAR.

Yes, so it is. Fifteen years all but a few months. [*Changing his tone.*] They must have been long years for you, up at the works, Gregers.

GREGERS.

They seemed long while I was living them; now they are over, I hardly know how the time has gone.

[OLD EKDAL *comes from his room without his pipe, but with his old-fashioned uniform cap on his head; his gait is somewhat unsteady.*

EKDAL.

Come now, Hialmar, let's sit down and have a good talk about this—h'm—what was it again?

HIALMAR.

[*Going towards him.*] Father, we have a visitor here—Gregers Werle.—I don't know if you remember him.

EKDAL.

[*Looking at* GREGERS, *who has risen.*] Werle? Is that the son? What does he want with me?

HIALMAR.

Nothing; it's me he has come to see.

EKDAL.

Oh! Then there's nothing wrong?

HIALMAR.

No, no, of course not.

EKDAL.

[*With a large gesture.*] Not that I'm afraid, you know; but——

GREGERS.

[*Goes over to him.*] I bring you a greeting from your old hunting-grounds, Lieutenant Ekdal.

EKDAL.

Hunting-grounds?

GREGERS.

Yes, up in Höidal, about the works, you know.

EKDAL.

Oh, up there. Yes, I knew all those places well in the old days.

GREGERS.

You were a great sportsman then.

EKDAL.

So I was, I don't deny it. You're looking at my uniform cap. I don't ask anybody's leave to wear it in the house. So long as I don't go out in the streets with it——

[HEDVIG *brings a plate of bread and butter, which she puts upon the table.*

HIALMAR.

Sit down, father, and have a glass of beer. Help yourself, Gregers.

[EKDAL *mutters and stumbles over to the sofa.* GREGERS *seats himself on the chair nearest to him,* HIALMAR *on the other side of* GREGERS. GINA *sits a little way from the table, sewing;* HEDVIG *stands beside her father.*

GREGERS.

Can you remember, Lieutenant Ekdal, how Hialmar and I used to come up and visit you in the summer and at Christmas?

EKDAL.

Did you? No, no, no; I don't remember it. But sure enough I've been a tidy bit of a sportsman in my day. I've shot bears too. I've shot nine of 'em, no less.

GREGERS.

[*Looking sympathetically at him.*] And now you never get any shooting?

EKDAL.

Can't just say that, sir. Get a shot now and then perhaps. Of course not in the old way. For the woods you see—the woods, the woods——! [*Drinks.*] Are the woods fine up there now?

GREGERS.

Not so fine as in your time. They have been thinned a good deal.

EKDAL.

Thinned? [*More softly, and as if afraid.*] It's dangerous work that. Bad things come of it. The woods revenge themselves.

HIALMAR.

[*Filling up his glass.*] Come—a little more, father.

GREGERS.

How can a man like you—such a man for the open air—live in the midst of a stuffy town, boxed within four walls?

EKDAL.

[*Laughs quietly and glances at* HIALMAR.] Oh, it's not so bad here. Not at all so bad.

GREGERS.

But don't you miss all the things that used to be a part of your very being—the cool sweeping breezes, the free life in the woods and on the uplands, among beasts and birds——?

EKDAL.

[*Smiling.*] Hialmar, shall we let him see it?

HIALMAR.

[*Hastily and a little embarrassed.*] Oh no no, father; not this evening.

GREGERS.

What does he want to show me?

HIALMAR.

Oh, it's only something—you can see it another time.

GREGERS.

[*Continues, to the old man.*] You see I have been thinking, Lieutenant Ekdal, that you should come up with me to the works; I am sure to be going back soon. No doubt you could get some copying there too. And here, you have nothing on earth to interest you—nothing to liven you up.

EKDAL.

[*Stares in astonishment at him.*] Have *I* nothing on earth to——!

GREGERS.

Of course you have Hialmar; but then he has his own family. And a man like you, who has always had such a passion for what is free and wild—— '

EKDAL.

[*Thumps the table.*] Hialmar, he s h a l l see it!

HIALMAR.

Oh, do you think it's worth while, father? It's all dark.

EKDAL.

Nonsense; it's moonlight. [*Rises.*] He s h a l l see it, I tell you. Let me pass! Come and help me, Hialmar.

HEDVIG.

Oh yes, do, father!

HIALMAR.

[*Rising.*] Very well then.

GREGERS.

[*To* GINA.] What is it?

GINA.

Oh, nothing so very wonderful, after all.

[EKDAL *and* HIALMAR *have gone to the back wall and are each pushing back a side of the sliding door;*

HEDVIG *helps the old man;* GREGERS *remains standing by the sofa;* GINA *sits still and sews. Through the open doorway a large, deep irregular garret is seen with odd nooks and corners; a couple of stove-pipes running through it, from rooms below. There are skylights through which clear moonbeams shine in on some parts of the great room; others lie in deep shadow.*]

EKDAL.

[*To* GREGERS.] You may come close up if you like.

GREGERS.

[*Going over to them.*] Why, what is it?

EKDAL.

Look for yourself. H'm.

HIALMAR.

[*Somewhat embarrassed.*] This belongs to father, you understand.

GREGERS.

[*At the door, looks into the garret.*] Why, you keep poultry, Lieutenant Ekdal.

EKDAL.

Should think we d i d keep poultry. They've gone to roost now. But you should just see our fowls by daylight, sir!

HEDVIG.

And there's a——

EKDAL.

Sh—sh! don't say anything about it yet.

GREGERS.

And you have pigeons too, I see.

EKDAL.

Oh yes, haven't we just got pigeons! They have their nest-boxes up there under the roof-tree; for pigeons like to roost high, you see.

HIALMAR.

They aren't all common pigeons.

EKDAL.

Common! Should think not indeed! We have tumblers, and a pair of pouters, too. But come here! Can you see that hutch down there by the wall?

GREGERS.

Yes; what do you use it for?

EKDAL.

That's where the rabbits sleep, sir.

GREGERS.

Dear me; so you have rabbits too?

EKDAL.

Yes, you may take my word for it, we have rabbits! He wants to know if we have rabbits, Hialmar! H'm!

But now comes t h e thing, let me tell you! Here we have it! Move away, Hedvig. Stand here; that's right, —and now look down there.—Don't you see a basket with straw in it?

GREGERS.

Yes. And I can see a fowl lying in the basket.

EKDAL.

H'm—"a fowl"——

GREGERS.

Isn't it a duck?

EKDAL.

[*Hurt.*] Why, of course it's a duck.

HIALMAR.

But what k i n d of duck, do you think?

HEDVIG.

It's not just a common duck——

EKDAL.

Sh!

GREGERS.

And it's not a Muscovy duck either.

EKDAL.

No, Mr.—Werle; it's not a Muscovy duck; for it's a wild duck!

GREGERS.

Is it really? A wild duck?

EKDAL.

Yes, that's what it is. That "fowl" as you call it—is the wild duck. It's our wild duck, sir.

HEDVIG.

My wild duck. It belongs to me.

GREGERS.

And can it live up here in the garret? Does it thrive?

EKDAL.

Of course it has a trough of water to splash about in, you know.

HIALMAR.

Fresh water every other day.

GINA.

[*Turning towards* HIALMAR.] But my dear Ekdal, it's getting icy cold here.

EKDAL.

H'm, we had better shut up then. It's as well not to disturb their night's rest, too. Close up, Hedvig.

[HIALMAR *and* HEDVIG *push the garret doors together.*

EKDAL.

Another time you shall see her properly. [*Seats himself in the arm-chair by the stove.*] Oh, they're curious things, these wild ducks, I can tell you.

GREGERS.

How did you manage to catch it, Lieutenant Ekdal?

EKDAL.

I didn't catch it. There's a certain man in this town whom we have to thank for it.

GREGERS.

[*Starts slightly.*] That man was not my father, was he?

EKDAL.

You've hit it. Your father and no one else. H'm.

HIALMAR.

Strange that you should guess that, Gregers.

GREGERS.

You were telling me that you owed so many things to my father; and so I thought perhaps——

GINA.

But we didn't get the duck from Mr. Werle himself——

EKDAL.

It's Håkon Werle we have to thank for her, all the same, Gina. [*To* GREGERS.] He was shooting from a boat, you see, and he brought her down. But your father's sight is not very good now. H'm; she was only wounded.

GREGERS.

Ah! She got a couple of slugs in her body, I suppose.

HIALMAR.

Yes, two or three.

HEDVIG.

She was hit under the wing, so that she couldn't fly.

GREGERS.

And I suppose she dived to the bottom, eh?

EKDAL.

[*Sleepily, in a thick voice.*] Of course. Always do that, wild ducks do. They shoot to the bottom as deep as they can get, sir—and bite themselves fast in the tangle and sea-weed—and all the devil's own mess that grows down there. And they never come up again.

GREGERS.

But y o u r wild duck came up again, Lieutenant Ekdal.

EKDAL.

He had such an amazingly clever dog, your father had. And that dog—he dived in after the duck and fetched her up again.

GREGERS.

[*Who has turned to* HIALMAR.] And then she was sent to you here?

HIALMAR.

Not at once; at first your father took her home. But she wouldn't thrive there; so Pettersen was told to put an end to her——

EKDAL.

[*Half asleep.*] H'm—yes—Pettersen—that ass——

HIALMAR.

[*Speaking more softly.*] That was how we got her, you see; for father knows Pettersen a little; and when he heard about the wild duck he got him to hand her over to us.

GREGERS.

And now she thrives as well as possible in the garret there?

HIALMAR.

Yes, wonderfully well. She has got fat. You see, she has lived in there so long now that she has forgotten her natural wild life; and it all depends on t h a t.

GREGERS.

You are right there, Hialmar. Be sure you never let her get a glimpse of the sky and the sea——. But I mustn't stay any longer; I think your father is asleep.

HIALMAR.

Oh, as for that——

GREGERS.

But, by-the-bye—you said you had a room to let—a spare room?

HIALMAR.

Yes; what then? Do you know of anybody——?

GREGERS.

Can *I* have that room?

HIALMAR.

You?

GINA.

Oh no, Mr. Werle, y o u——

GREGERS.

May I have the room? If so, I'll take possession first thing to-morrow morning.

HIALMAR.

Yes, with the greatest pleasure——

GINA.

But, Mr. Werle, I'm sure it's not at all the sort of room for y o u.

HIALMAR.

Why, Gina! how can you say that?

GINA.

Why, because the room's neither large enough nor light enough, and——

GREGERS.

That really doesn't matter, Mrs. Ekdal.

HIALMAR.

I call it quite a nice room, and not at all badly furnished either.

GINA.

But remember the pair of them underneath.

GREGERS.

What pair?

GINA.

Well, there's one as has been a tutor——

HIALMAR.

That's Molvik—Mr. Molvik, B.A.

GINA.

And then there's a doctor, by the name of Relling.

GREGERS.

Relling? I know him a little; he practised for a time up in Höidal.

GINA.

They're a regular rackety pair, they are. As often as not, they're out on the loose in the evenings; and then they come home at all hours, and they're not always just——

GREGERS.

One soon gets used to that sort of thing. I daresay I shall be like the wild duck——

GINA.

H'm; I think you ought to sleep upon it first, anyway.

GREGERS.

You seem very unwilling to have me in the house, Mrs. Ekdal.

GINA.

Oh no! What makes you think t h a t?

HIALMAR.

Well, you really behave strangely about it, Gina. [*To* GREGERS.] Then I suppose you intend to remain in the town for the present?

GREGERS.

[*Putting on his overcoat.*] Yes, now I intend to remain here.

HIALMAR.

And yet not at your father's? What do you propose to do, then?

GREGERS.

Ah, if I only knew t h a t, Hialmar, I shouldn't be so badly off! But when one has the misfortune to be called Gregers—! "Gregers"—and then "Werle" after it; did you ever hear anything so hideous?

HIALMAR.

Oh, I don't think so at all.

GREGERS.

Ugh! Bah! I feel I should like to spit upon the fellow that answers to such a name. But when a man is once for all doomed to be Gregers—Werle in this world, as I am——

HIALMAR.

[*Laughs.*] Ha ha! If you weren't Gregers Werle, what would you like to be?

GREGERS.

If I could choose, I should like best to be a clever dog.

GINA.

A dog!

HEDVIG.

[*Involuntarily.*] Oh no!

GREGERS.

Yes, an amazingly clever dog; one that goes to the bottom after wild ducks when they dive and bite themselves fast in tangle and sea-weed, down among the ooze.

HIALMAR.

Upon my word now, Gregers—I don't in the least know what you're driving at.

GREGERS.

Oh well, you might not be much the wiser if you did. It's understood, then, that I move in early to-morrow morning. [*To* GINA.] I won't give you any trouble; I

do everything for myself. [*To* HIALMAR.] We can talk about the rest to-morrow.—Good-night, Mrs. Ekdal. [*Nods to* HEDVIG.] Good-night.

GINA.

Good-night, Mr. Werle.

HEDVIG.

Good-night.

HIALMAR.

[*Who has lighted a candle.*] Wait a moment; I must show you a light; the stairs are sure to be dark.

[GREGERS *and* HIALMAR *go out by the passage door.*

GINA.

[*Looking straight before her, with her sewing in her lap.*] Wasn't that queer-like talk about wanting to be a dog?

HEDVIG.

Do you know, mother—I believe he meant something quite different by that.

GINA.

Why, what s h o u l d he mean?

HEDVIG.

Oh, I don't know; but it seemed to me he meant something different from what he said—all the time.

GINA.

Do you think so? Yes, it was sort of queer.

HIALMAR.

[*Comes back.*] The lamp was still burning. [*Puts out the candle and sets it down.*] Ah, now one can get a mouthful of food at last. [*Begins to eat the bread and butter.*] Well, you see, Gina—if only you keep your eyes open——

GINA.

How, keep your eyes open——?

HIALMAR.

Why, haven't we at last had the luck to get the room let? And just think—to a person like Gregers—a good old friend.

GINA.

Well, I don't know what to say about it.

HEDVIG.

Oh mother, you'll see; it'll be such fun!

HIALMAR.

You're very strange. You were so bent upon getting the room let before; and now you don't like it.

GINA.

Yes I do, Ekdal; if it had only been to some one else—— But what do you suppose Mr. Werle will say?

HIALMAR.

Old Werle? It doesn't concern him.

GINA.

But surely you can see that there's something amiss between them again, or the young man wouldn't be leaving home. You know very well those two can't get on with each other.

HIALMAR.

Very likely not, but——

GINA.

And now Mr. Werle may fancy it's you that has egged him on——

HIALMAR.

Let him fancy so, then! Mr. Werle has done a great deal for me; far be it from me to deny it. But that doesn't make me everlastingly dependent upon him.

GINA.

But, my dear Ekdal, maybe grandfather'll suffer for it. He may lose the little bit of work he gets from Gråberg.

HIALMAR.

I could almost say: so much the better! Is it not humiliating for a man like me to see his grey-haired father treated as a pariah? But now I believe the fulness of time is at hand. [*Takes a fresh piece of bread and butter.*] As sure as I have a mission in life, I mean to fulfil it now!

HEDVIG.

Oh yes, father, do!

GINA.

Hush! Don't wake him!

HIALMAR.

[*More softly.*] I w i l l fulfil it, I say. The day shall come when—— And that is why I say it's a good thing we have let the room; for that makes me more independent. The man who has a mission in life must be independent. [*By the arm-chair, with emotion.*] Poor old white-haired father! Rely on your Hialmar. He has broad shoulders—strong shoulders, at any rate. You shall yet wake up some fine day and—— [*To* GINA.] Do you not believe it?

GINA.

[*Rising.*] Yes, of course I do; but in the meantime suppose we see about getting him to bed.

HIALMAR.

Yes, come. [*They take hold of the old man carefully.*

ACT THIRD

HIALMAR EKDAL'S *studio. It is morning: the daylight shines through the large window in the slanting roof; the curtain is drawn back.*

HIALMAR *is sitting at the table, busy retouching a photograph; several others lie before him. Presently* GINA, *wearing her hat and cloak, enters by the passage door; she has a covered basket on her arm.*

HIALMAR.

Back already, Gina?

GINA.

Oh yes, one can't let the grass grow under one's feet. [*Sets her basket on a chair, and takes off her things.*

HIALMAR.

Did you look in at Gregers' room?

GINA.

Yes, that I did. It's a rare sight, I can tell you; he's made a pretty mess to start off with.

HIALMAR.

How so?

GINA.

He was determined to do everything for himself, he said; so he sets to work to light the stove, and what must

he do but screw down the damper till the whole room is full of smoke. Ugh! There was a smell fit to——

HIALMAR.

Well, really!

GINA.

But that's not the worst of it; for then he thinks he'll put out the fire, and goes and empties his water-jug into the stove, and so makes the whole floor one filthy puddle.

HIALMAR.

How annoying!

GINA.

I've got the porter's wife to clear up after him, pig that he is! But the room won't be fit to live in till the afternoon.

HIALMAR.

What's he doing with himself in the meantime?

GINA.

He said he was going out for a little while.

HIALMAR.

I looked in upon him too, for a moment—after you had gone.

GINA.

So I heard. You've asked him to lunch.

HIALMAR.

Just to a little bit of early lunch, you know. It's his first day—we can hardly do less. You've got something in the house, I suppose?

GINA.

I shall have to find something or other.

HIALMAR.

And don't cut it too fine, for I fancy Relling and Molvik are coming up too. I just happened to meet Relling on the stairs, you see; so I had to——

GINA.

Oh, are we to have those two as well?

HIALMAR.

Good Lord—a couple more or less can't make any difference.

OLD EKDAL.

[*Opens his door and looks in.*] I say, Hialmar—— [*Sees* GINA.] Oh!

GINA.

Do you want anything, grandfather?

EKDAL.

Oh no, it doesn't matter. H'm! [*Retires again.*

GINA.

[*Takes up the basket.*] Be sure you see that he doesn't go out.

HIALMAR.

All right, all right. And, Gina, a little herring-salad wouldn't be a bad idea; Relling and Molvik were out on the loose again last night.

GINA.

If only they don't come before I'm ready for them——

HIALMAR.

No, of course they won't; take your own time.

GINA.

Very well; and meanwhile you can be working a bit.

HIALMAR.

Well, I am working! I am working as hard as I can!

GINA.

Then you'll have that job off your hands, you see.
[*She goes out to the kitchen with her basket.*

HIALMAR *sits for a time pencilling away at the photograph, in an indolent and listless manner.*

EKDAL.

[*Peeps in, looks round the studio, and says softly:*] Are you busy?

HIALMAR.

Yes, I'm toiling at these wretched pictures——

EKDAL.

Well well, never mind,—since you're so busy—h'm!
[*He goes out again; the door stands open.*

HIALMAR.

[*Continues for some time in silence; then he lays down his brush and goes over to the door.*] Are y o u busy, father?

EKDAL.

[*In a grumbling tone, within.*] If you're busy, I'm busy too. H'm!

HIALMAR.

Oh, very well, then. [*Goes to his work again.*

EKDAL.

[*Presently, coming to the door again.*] H'm; I say, Hialmar, I'm not so v e r y busy, you know.

HIALMAR.

I thought you were writing.

EKDAL.

Oh, devil take it! can't Gråberg wait a day or two? After all, it's not a matter of life and death.

HIALMAR.

No; and you're not his slave either.

EKDAL.

And about that other business in there——

HIALMAR.

Just what I was thinking of. Do you want to go in? Shall I open the door for you?

EKDAL.

Well, it wouldn't be a bad notion.

HIALMAR.

[*Rises.*] Then we'd have t h a t off our hands.

EKDAL.

Yes, exactly. It's got to be ready first thing to-morrow. It i s to-morrow, isn't it? H'm?

HIALMAR.

Yes, of course it's to-morrow.

[HIALMAR *and* EKDAL *push aside each his half of the sliding door. The morning sun is shining in through the skylights; some doves are flying about; others sit cooing, upon the perches; the hens are heard clucking now and then, further back in the garret.*

HIALMAR.

There; now you can get to work, father.

EKDAL.

[*Goes in.*] Aren't you coming too?

HIALMAR.

Well really, do you know——; I almost think—— [*Sees* GINA *at the kitchen door.*] I? No; I haven't time; I must work.—But now for our new contrivance——

[*He pulls a cord, a curtain slips down inside, the lower part consisting of a piece of old sailcloth, the upper part of a stretched fishing net. The floor of the garret is thus no longer visible.*

HIALMAR.

[*Goes to the table.*] So! Now, perhaps I can sit in peace for a little while.

GINA.

Is he rampaging in there again?

HIALMAR.

Would you rather have had him slip down to Madam Eriksen's. [*Seats himself.*] Do you want anything? You know you said——

GINA.

I only wanted to ask if you think we can lay the table for lunch here?

HIALMAR.

Yes; we have no early appointment, I suppose?

GINA.

No, I expect no one to-day except those two sweethearts that are to be taken together.

HIALMAR.

Why the deuce couldn't they be taken together another day!

GINA.

Don't you know, I told them to come in the afternoon, when you are having your nap.

HIALMAR.

Oh, that's capital. Very well, let us have lunch here then.

GINA.

All right; but there's no hurry about laying the cloth; you can have the table for a good while yet.

HIALMAR.

Do you think I am not sticking at my work? I'm at it as hard as I can!

GINA.

Then you'll be free later on, you know.

[*Goes out into the kitchen again. Short pause.*

EKDAL.

[*In the garret doorway, behind the net.*] Hialmar!

HIALMAR.

Well?

EKDAL.

Afraid we shall have to move the water-trough, after all.

HIALMAR.

What else have I been saying all along?

EKDAL.

H'm—h'm—h'm. [*Goes away from the door again.*

[HIALMAR *goes on working a little; glances towards the garret and half rises.* HEDVIG *comes in from the kitchen.*

HIALMAR.

[*Sits down again hurriedly.*] What do you want?

HEDVIG.

I only wanted to come in beside you, father.

HIALMAR.

[*After a pause.*] What makes you go prying around like that? Perhaps you are told off to watch me?

HEDVIG.

No, no.

HIALMAR.

What is your mother doing out there?

HEDVIG.

Oh, mother's in the middle of making the herring-salad. [*Goes to the table.*] Isn't there any little thing I could help you with, father?

HIALMAR.

Oh no. It is right that I should bear the whole burden—so long as my strength holds out. Set your mind at rest, Hedvig; if only your father keeps his health——

HEDVIG.

Oh no, father! You mustn't talk in that horrid way.

[*She wanders about a little, stops by the doorway and looks into the garret.*

HIALMAR.

Tell me, what is he doing?

HEDVIG.

I think he's making a new path to the water-trough.

HIALMAR.

He can never manage t h a t by himself! And here am I doomed to sit——!

HEDVIG.

[*Goes to him.*] Let m e take the brush, father; I c a n do it, quite well.

HIALMAR.

Oh nonsense; you will only hurt your eyes.

HEDVIG.

Not a bit. Give me the brush.

HIALMAR.

[*Rising.*] Well, it won't take more than a minute or two.

HEDVIG.

Pooh, what harm can it do then? [*Takes the brush.*] There! [*Seats herself.*] I can begin upon this one.

HIALMAR.

But mind you don't hurt your eyes! Do you hear? *I* won't be answerable; you do it on your own responsibility—understand that.

HEDVIG.

[*Retouching.*] Yes yes, I understand.

HIALMAR.

You are quite clever at it, Hedvig. Only a minute or two, you know.

[*He slips through by the edge of the curtain into the garret.* HEDVIG *sits at her work.* HIALMAR *and* EKDAL *are heard disputing inside.*

HIALMAR.

[*Appears behind the net.*] I say, Hedvig—give me those pincers that are lying on the shelf. And the chisel. [*Turns away inside.*] Now you shall see, father. Just let me show you first what I mean!

[HEDVIG *has fetched the required tools from the shelf, and hands them to him through the net.*

HIALMAR.

Ah, thanks. I didn't come a moment too soon.

[*Goes back from the curtain again; they are heard carpentering and talking inside.* HEDVIG *stands looking in at them. A moment later there is a knock at the passage door; she does not notice it.*

GREGERS WERLE.

[*Bareheaded, in indoor dress, enters and stops near the door.*] H'm——!

HEDVIG.

[*Turns and goes towards him.*] Good morning. Please come in.

GREGERS.

Thank you. [*Looking towards the garret.*] You seem to have workpeople in the house.

HEDVIG.

No, it is only father and grandfather. I'll tell them you are here.

GREGERS.

No no, don't do that; I would rather wait a little
[*Seats himself on the sofa.*

HEDVIG.

It looks so untidy here——
[*Begins to clear away the photographs.*

GREGERS.

Oh, don't take them away. Are those prints that have to be finished off?

HEDVIG.

Yes, they are a few I was helping father with.

GREGERS.

Please don't let me disturb you.

HEDVIG.

Oh no.

[*She gathers the things to her and sits down to work;* GREGERS *looks at her, meanwhile, in silence.*

GREGERS.

Did the wild duck sleep well last night?

HEDVIG.

Yes, I think so, thanks.

GREGERS.

[*Turning towards the garret.*] It looks quite different by day from what it did last night in the moonlight.

HEDVIG.

Yes, it changes ever so much. It looks different in the morning and in the afternoon; and it's different on rainy days from what it is in fine weather.

GREGERS.

Have you noticed that?

HEDVIG.

Yes, how could I help it?

GREGERS.

Are you, too, fond of being in there with the wild duck?

HEDVIG.

Yes, when I can manage it——

GREGERS.

But I suppose you haven't much spare time; you go to school, no doubt.

HEDVIG.

No, not now; father is afraid of my hurting my eyes.

GREGERS.

Oh; then he reads with you himself?

HEDVIG.

Father has promised to read with me; but he has never had time yet.

GREGERS.

Then is there nobody else to give you a little help?

HEDVIG.

Yes, there is Mr. Molvik; but he is not always exactly —quite——

GREGERS.

Sober?

HEDVIG.

Yes, I suppose that's it!

GREGERS.

Why, then you must have any amount of time on your hands. And in there I suppose it is a sort of world by itself?

HEDVIG.

Oh yes, quite. And there are such lots of wonderful things.

GREGERS.

Indeed?

HEDVIG.

Yes, there are big cupboards full of books; and a great many of the books have pictures in them.

GREGERS.

Aha!

HEDVIG.

And there's an old bureau with drawers and flaps, and a big clock with figures that go out and in. But the clock isn't going now.

GREGERS.

So time has come to a standstill in there—in the wild duck's domain.

HEDVIG.

Yes. And then there's an old paint-box and things of that sort; and all the books.

GREGERS.

And you read the books, I suppose?

HEDVIG.

Oh yes, when I get the chance. Most of them are English though, and I don't understand English. But then I look at the pictures.—There is one great big book called "Harrison's History of London."[1] It must be a hundred years old; and there are such heaps of pictures in it. At the beginning there is Death with an hour-glass and a woman. I think that is horrid. But then there are all the other pictures of churches, and castles, and streets, and great ships sailing on the sea.

GREGERS.

But tell me, where did all those wonderful things come from?

[1] *A New and Universal History of the Cities of London and Westminster*, by Walter Harrison. London, 1775, folio.

HEDVIG.

Oh, an old sea captain once lived here, and he brought them home with him. They used to call him "The Flying Dutchman." That was curious, because he wasn't a Dutchman at all.

GREGERS.

Was he not?

HEDVIG.

No. But at last he was drowned at sea; and so he left all those things behind him.

GREGERS.

Tell me now—when you are sitting in there looking at the pictures, don't you wish you could travel and see the real world for yourself?

HEDVIG.

Oh no! I mean always to stay at home and help father and mother.

GREGERS.

To retouch photographs?

HEDVIG.

No, not only that. I should love above everything to learn to engrave pictures like those in the English books.

GREGERS.

H'm. What does your father say to that?

HEDVIG.

I don't think father likes it; father is strange about such things. Only think, he talks of my learning basket-making, and straw-plaiting! But I don't think that would be much good.

GREGERS.

Oh no, I don't think so either.

HEDVIG.

But father was right in saying that if I had learnt basket-making I could have made the new basket for the wild duck.

GREGERS.

So you could; and it was you that ought to have done it, wasn't it?

HEDVIG.

Yes, for it's my wild duck.

GREGERS.

Of course it is.

HEDVIG.

Yes, it belongs to me. But I lend it to father and grandfather as often as they please.

GREGERS.

Indeed? What do they do with it?

HEDVIG.

Oh, they look after it, and build places for it, and so on.

GREGERS.

I see; for no doubt the wild duck is by far the most distinguished inhabitant of the garret?

HEDVIG.

Yes, indeed she is; for she is a r e a l wild fowl, you know. And then she is so much to be pitied; she has no one to care for, poor thing.

GREGERS.

She has no family, as the rabbits have——

HEDVIG.

No. The hens too, many of them, were chickens together; but she has been taken right away from all her friends. And then there is so much that is strange about the wild duck. Nobody knows her, and nobody knows where she came from either.

GREGERS.

And she has been down in the depths of the sea.

HEDVIG.

[*With a quick glance at him, represses a smile and asks:*] Why do you say "the depths of the sea"?

GREGERS.

What else should I say?

HEDVIG.

You could say "the bottom of the sea."[1]

GREGERS.

Oh, mayn't I just as well say the depths of the sea?

HEDVIG.

Yes; but it sounds so strange to me when other people speak of the depths of the sea.

GREGERS.

Why so? Tell me why?

HEDVIG.

No, I won't; it's so stupid.

GREGERS.

Oh no, I am sure it's not. Do tell me why you smiled.

HEDVIG.

Well, this is the reason: whenever I come to realise suddenly—in a flash—what is in there, it always seems to me that the whole room and everything in it should be called "the depths of the sea."—But that is so stupid.

GREGERS.

You mustn't say that.

[1] Gregers here uses the old-fashioned expression "havsens bund," while Hedvig would have him use the more commonplace "havets bund" or "havbunden."

HEDVIG.

Oh yes, for you know it is only a garret.

GREGERS.

[*Looks fixedly at her.*] Are you so sure of that?

HEDVIG.

[*Astonished.*] That it's a garret?

GREGERS.

Are you quite certain of it?

[HEDVIG *is silent, and looks at him open-mouthed.* GINA *comes in from the kitchen with the table things.*

GREGERS.

[*Rising.*] I have come in upon you too early.

GINA.

Oh, you must be somewhere; and we're nearly ready now, any way. Clear the table, Hedvig.

[HEDVIG *clears away her things; she and* GINA *lay the cloth during what follows.* GREGERS *seats himself in the arm-chair, and turns over an album.*

GREGERS.

I hear you can retouch, Mrs. Ekdal.

GINA.

[*With a side glance.*] Yes, I can.

GREGERS.

That was exceedingly lucky.

GINA.

How—lucky?

GREGERS.

Since Ekdal took to photography, I mean.

HEDVIG.

Mother can take photographs too.

GINA.

Oh, yes; I was bound to learn t h a t.

GREGERS.

So it is really you that carry on the business, I suppose?

GINA.

Yes, when Ekdal hasn't time himself——

GREGERS.

He is a great deal taken up with his old father, I daresay.

GINA.

Yes; and then you can't expect a man like Ekdal to do nothing but take car-de-visits of Dick, Tom and Harry.

GREGERS.

I quite agree with you; but having once gone in for the thing——

GINA.

You can surely understand, Mr. Werle, that Ekdal's not like one of your common photographers.

GREGERS.

Of course not; but still——

[*A shot is fired within the garret.*

GREGERS.

[*Starting up.*] What's that?

GINA.

Ugh! now they're firing again!

GREGERS.

Have they firearms in there?

HEDVIG.

They are out shooting.

GREGERS.

What! [*At the door of the garret.*] Are you shooting, Hialmar?

HIALMAR.

[*Inside the net.*] Are you there? I didn't know; I was so taken up—— [*To* HEDVIG.] Why did you not let us know? [*Comes into the studio.*

GREGERS.

Do you go shooting in the garret?

HIALMAR.

[*Showing a double-barrelled pistol.*] Oh, only with this thing.

GINA.

Yes, you and grandfather will do yourselves a mischief some day with that there pigstol.

HIALMAR.

[*With irritation.*] I believe I have told you that this kind of firearm is called a p i s t o l.

GINA.

Oh, that doesn't make it much better, that I can see.

GREGERS.

So you have become a sportsman too, Hialmar.

HIALMAR.

Only a little rabbit-shooting now and then. Mostly to please father, you understand.

GINA.

Men are strange beings; they must always have something to pervert theirselves with.

HIALMAR.

[*Snappishly.*] Just so; we must always have something to d i v e r t ourselves with.

GINA.

Yes, that's just what I say.

HIALMAR.

H'm. [*To* GREGERS.] You see the garret is fortunately so situated that no one can hear us shooting. [*Lays the pistol on the top shelf of the bookcase.*] Don't touch the pistol, Hedvig! One of the barrels is loaded; remember that.

GREGERS.

[*Looking through the net.*] You have a fowling-piece too, I see.

HIALMAR.

That is father's old gun. It's of no use now; something has gone wrong with the lock. But it's fun to have it all the same; for we can take it to pieces now and then, and clean and grease it, and screw it together again.—Of course, it's mostly father that fiddle-faddles with all that sort of thing.

HEDVIG.

[*Beside* GREGERS.] Now you can see the wild duck properly.

GREGERS.

I was just looking at her. One of her wings seems to me to droop a bit.

HEDVIG.

Well, no wonder; her wing was broken, you know.

GREGERS.

And she trails one foot a little. Isn't that so?

HIALMAR.

Perhaps a very little bit.

HEDVIG.

Yes, it was by that foot the dog took hold of her.

HIALMAR.

But otherwise she hasn't the least thing the matter with her; and that is simply marvellous for a creature that has a charge of shot in her body, and has been between a dog's teeth——

GREGERS.

[*With a glance at* HEDVIG.]——and that has lain in the depths of the sea—so long.

HEDVIG.

[*Smiling.*] Yes.

GINA.

[*Laying the table.*] That blessëd wild duck! What a lot of fuss you do make over her.

HIALMAR.

H'm;—will lunch soon be ready?

GINA.

Yes, directly. Hedvig, you must come and help me now. [GINA *and* HEDVIG *go out into the kitchen.*

HIALMAR.

[*In a low voice.*] I think you had better not stand there looking in at father; he doesn't like it. [GREGERS *moves away from the garret door.*] Besides I may as well shut up before the others come. [*Claps his hands to*

drive the fowls back.] Shh—shh, in with you! [*Draws up the curtain and pulls the doors together.*] All the contrivances are my own invention. It's really quite amusing to have things of this sort to potter with, and to put to rights when they get out of order. And it's absolutely necessary, too; for Gina objects to having rabbits and fowls in the studio.

GREGERS.

To be sure; and I suppose the studio is your wife's special department?

HIALMAR.

As a rule, I leave the everyday details of business to her; for then I can take refuge in the parlour and give my mind to more important things.

GREGERS.

What things may t h e y be, Hialmar?

HIALMAR.

I wonder you have not asked t h a t question sooner. But perhaps you haven't heard of the invention?

GREGERS.

The invention? No.

HIALMAR.

Really? Have you not? Oh no, out there in the wilds——

GREGERS.

So you have invented something, have you?

HIALMAR.

It is not quite completed yet; but I am working at it. You can easily imagine that when I resolved to devote myself to photography, it wasn't simply with the idea of taking likenesses of all sorts of commonplace people.

GREGERS.

No; your wife was saying the same thing just now.

HIALMAR.

I swore that if I consecrated my powers to this handicraft, I would so exalt it that it should become both an art and a science. And to that end I determined to make this great invention.

GREGERS.

And what is the nature of the invention? What purpose does it serve?

HIALMAR.

Oh, my dear fellow, you mustn't ask for details yet. It takes time, you see. And you must not think that my motive is vanity. It is not for my own sake that I am working. Oh no; it is my life's mission that stands before me night and day.

GREGERS.

What is your life's mission?

HIALMAR.

Do you forget the old man with the silver hair?

GREGERS.

Your poor father? Well, but what can you do for him?

HIALMAR.

I can raise up his self-respect from the dead, by restoring the name of Ekdal to honour and dignity.

GREGERS.

Then that is your life's mission?

HIALMAR.

Yes. I will rescue the shipwrecked man. For shipwrecked he was, by the very first blast of the storm. Even while those terrible investigations were going on, he was no longer himself. That pistol there—the one we use to shoot rabbits with—has played its part in the tragedy of the house of Ekdal.

GREGERS.

The pistol? Indeed?

HIALMAR.

When the sentence of imprisonment was passed—he had the pistol in his hand——

GREGERS.

Had he——?

HIALMAR.

Yes; but he dared not use it. His courage failed him. So broken, so demoralised was he even then! Oh, can

you understand it? He, a soldier; he, who had shot nine bears, and who was descended from two lieutenant-colonels—one after the other of course. Can you understand it, Gregers?

GREGERS.

Yes, I understand it well enough.

HIALMAR.

I cannot. And once more the pistol played a part in the history of our house. When he had put on the grey clothes and was under lock and key—oh, that was a terrible time for me, I can tell you. I kept the blinds drawn down over both my windows. When I peeped out, I saw the sun shining as if nothing had happened. I could not understand it. I saw people going along the street, laughing and talking about indifferent things. I could not understand it. It seemed to me that the whole of existence must be at a standstill—as if under an eclipse.

GREGERS.

I felt like that too, when my mother died.

HIALMAR.

It was in such an hour that Hialmar Ekdal pointed the pistol at his own breast.

GREGERS.

You too thought of——!

HIALMAR.

Yes.

GREGERS.

But you did not fire?

HIALMAR.

No. At the decisive moment I won the victory over myself. I remained in life. But I can assure you it takes some courage to choose life under circumstances like those.

GREGERS.

Well, that depends on how you look at it.

HIALMAR.

Yes, indeed, it takes courage. But I am glad I was firm: for now I shall soon perfect my invention; and Dr. Relling thinks, as I do myself, that father may be allowed to wear his uniform again. I will demand that as my sole reward.

GREGERS.

So t h a t is what he meant about his uniform——?

HIALMAR.

Yes, that is what he most yearns for. You can't think how my heart bleeds for him. Every time we celebrate any little family festival—Gina's and my wedding-day, or whatever it may be—in comes the old man in the lieutenant's uniform of happier days. But if he only hears a knock at the door—for he daren't show himself to strangers, you know—he hurries back to his room again as fast as his old legs can carry him. Oh, it's heart-rending for a son to see such things!

GREGERS.

How long do you think it will take you to finish your invention?

HIALMAR.

Come now, you mustn't expect me to enter into particulars like that. An invention is not a thing completely under one's own control. It depends largely on inspiration—on intuition—and it is almost impossible to predict when the inspiration may come.

GREGERS.

But it's advancing?

HIALMAR.

Yes, certainly, it is advancing. I turn it over in my mind every day; I am full of it. Every afternoon, when I have had my dinner, I shut myself up in the parlour, where I can ponder undisturbed. But I can't be goaded to it; it's not a bit of good; Relling says so too.

GREGERS.

And you don't think that all that business in the garret draws you off and distracts you too much?

HIALMAR.

No no no; quite the contrary. You mustn't say that. I cannot be everlastingly absorbed in the same laborious train of thought. I must have something alongside of it to fill up the time of waiting. The inspiration, the intuition, you see—when it comes, it comes, and there's an end of it.

GREGERS.

My dear Hialmar, I almost think you have something of the wild duck in you.

HIALMAR.

Something of the wild duck? How do you mean?

GREGERS.

You have dived down and bitten yourself fast in the undergrowth.

HIALMAR.

Are you alluding to the well-nigh fatal shot that has broken my father's wing—and mine too?

GREGERS.

Not exactly to t h a t. I don't say that your wing has been broken; but you have strayed into a poisonous marsh, Hialmar; an insidious disease has taken hold of you, and you have sunk down to die in the dark.

HIALMAR.

I? To die in the dark? Look here, Gregers, you must really leave off talking such nonsense.

GREGERS.

Don't be afraid; I shall find a way to help you up again. I too have a mission in life now; I found it yesterday.

HIALMAR.

That's all very well; but you will please leave m e out of it. I can assure you that—apart from my very natural melancholy, of course—I am as contented as any one can wish to be.

GREGERS.

Your contentment is an effect of the marsh poison.

HIALMAR.

Now, my dear Gregers, pray do not go on about disease and poison; I am not used to that sort of talk. In m y house nobody ever speaks to me about unpleasant things.

GREGERS.

Ah, t h a t I can easily believe.

HIALMAR.

It's not good for me you see. And there a r e no marsh poisons here, as you express it. The poor photographer's roof is lowly, I know—and my circumstances are narrow. But I am an inventor, and I am the bread-winner of a family. That exalts me above my mean surroundings.—Ah, here comes lunch!

GINA *and* HEDVIG *bring bottles of ale, a decanter of brandy, glasses, etc. At the same time,* RELLING *and* MOLVIK *enter from the passage; they are both without hat or overcoat.* MOLVIK *is dressed in black.*

GINA.

[*Placing the things upon the table.*] Ah, you two have come in the nick of time.

RELLING.

Molvik got it into his head that he could smell herring-salad, and then there was no holding him.—Good morning again, Ekdal.

HIALMAR.

Gregers, let me introduce you to Mr. Molvik. Doctor—— Oh, you know Relling, don't you?

GREGERS.

Yes, slightly.

RELLING.

Oh, Mr. Werle, junior! Yes, we two have had one or two little skirmishes up at the Höidal works. You've just moved in?

GREGERS.

I moved in this morning.

RELLING.

Molvik and I live right under you; so you haven't far to go for the doctor and the clergyman, if you should need anything in that line.

GREGERS.

Thanks, it's not quite unlikely; for yesterday we were thirteen at table.

HIALMAR.

Oh, come now, don't let us get upon unpleasant subjects again!

RELLING.

You may make your mind easy, Ekdal; I'll be hanged if the finger of fate points to y o u.

HIALMAR.

I should hope not, for the sake of my family. But let us sit down now, and eat and drink and be merry.

GREGERS.

Shall we not wait for your father?

HIALMAR.

No, his lunch will be taken in to him later. Come along!

[*The men seat themselves at table, and eat and drink.* GINA *and* HEDVIG *go in and out and wait upon them.*

RELLING.

Molvik was frightfully screwed yesterday, Mrs. Ekdal.

GINA.

Really? Yesterday again?

RELLING.

Didn't you hear him when I brought him home last night.

GINA.

No, I can't say I did.

RELLING.

That was a good thing, for Molvik was disgusting last night.

GINA.

Is that true, Molvik?

MOLVIK.

Let us draw a veil over last night's proceedings. That sort of thing is totally foreign to my better self.

RELLING.

[*To* GREGERS.] It comes over him like a sort of possession, and then I have to go out on the loose with him. Mr. Molvik is dæmonic, you see.

GREGERS.

Dæmonic?

RELLING.

Molvik is dæmonic, yes.

GREGERS.

H'm.

RELLING.

And dæmonic natures are not made to walk straight through the world; they must meander a little now and then.—Well, so you still stick up there at those horrible grimy works?

GREGERS.

I have stuck there until now.

RELLING.

And did you ever manage to collect that claim you went about presenting?

GREGERS.

Claim? [*Understands him.*] Ah, I see.

HIALMAR.

Have you been presenting claims, Gregers?

GREGERS.

Oh, nonsense.

RELLING.

Faith, but he has, though! He went round to all the cottars' cabins presenting something he called "the claim of the ideal."

GREGERS.

I was young then.

RELLING.

You're right; you were very young. And as for the claim of the ideal—you never got it honoured while *I* was up there.

GREGERS.

Nor since either.

RELLING.

Ah, then you've learnt to knock a little discount off, I expect.

GREGERS.

Never, when I have a true man to deal with.

HIALMAR.

No, I should think not, indeed. A little butter, Gina.

RELLING.

And a slice of bacon for Molvik.

MOLVIK.

Ugh! not bacon! [*A knock at the garret door.*

HIALMAR.

Open the door, Hedvig; father wants to come out.

[HEDVIG *goes over and opens the door a little way;* EKDAL *enters with a fresh rabbit-skin; she closes the door after him.*

EKDAL.

Good morning, gentlemen! Good sport to-day. Shot a big one.

HIALMAR.

And you've gone and skinned it without waiting for me——!

EKDAL.

Salted it too. It's good tender meat, is rabbit; it's sweet; it tastes like sugar. Good appetite to you, gentlemen! [*Goes into his room*

MOLVIK.

[*Rising.*] Excuse me——; I can't——; I must get downstairs immediately——

RELLING.

Drink some soda water, man!

MOLVIK.

[*Hurrying away.*] Ugh—ugh!

[*Goes out by the passage door.*

RELLING.

[*To* HIALMAR.] Let us drain a glass to the old hunter.

HIALMAR.

[*Clinks glasses with him.*] To the undaunted sportsman who has looked death in the face!

RELLING.

To the grey-haired—— [*Drinks.*] By-the-bye, is his hair grey or white?

HIALMAR.

Something between the two, I fancy; for that matter, he has very few hairs left of any colour.

RELLING.

Well well, one can get through the world with a wig. After all, you are a happy man, Ekdal; you have your noble mission to labour for——

HIALMAR.

And I do labour, I can tell you,

RELLING.

And then you have your excellent wife, shuffling quietly in and out in her felt slippers, with that see-saw walk of hers, and making everything cosy and comfortable about you.

HIALMAR.

Yes, Gina—[*Nods to her*]—you are a good helpmate on the path of life.

GINA.

Oh, don't sit there cricketizing me.

RELLING.

And your Hedvig too, Ekdal!

HIALMAR.

[*Affected.*] The child, yes! The child before everything! Hedvig, come here to me. [*Strokes her hair.*] What day is it to-morrow, eh?

HEDVIG.

[*Shaking him.*] Oh no, you're not to say anything, father!

HIALMAR.

It cuts me to the heart when I think what a poor affair it will be; only a little festivity in the garret——

HEDVIG.

Oh, but that's just what I like!

RELLING.

Just you wait till the wonderful invention sees the light, Hedvig!

HIALMAR.

Yes indeed—then you shall see——! Hedvig, I have resolved to make your future secure. You shall live in comfort all your days. I will demand—something or other—on your behalf. That shall be the poor inventor's sole reward.

HEDVIG.

[*Whispering, with her arms round his neck.*] Oh, you dear, kind father!

RELLING.

[*To* GREGERS.] Come now, don't you find it pleasant, for once in a way, to sit at a well-spread table in a happy family circle?

HIALMAR.

Ah yes, I really prize these social hours.

GREGERS.

For my part, I don't thrive in marsh vapours.

RELLING.

Marsh vapours?

HIALMAR.

Oh, don't begin with that stuff again!

GINA.

Goodness knows there's no vapours in t h i s house, Mr. Werle; I give the place a good airing every blessed day.

GREGERS.

[*Leaves the table.*] No airing y o u can give will drive out the taint I mean.

HIALMAR.

Taint!

GINA.

Yes, what do you say to that, Ekdal!

RELLING.

Excuse me—may it not be you yourself that have brought the taint from those mines up there?

GREGERS.

It is like you to call what I bring into this house a taint.

RELLING.

[*Goes up to him.*] Look here, Mr. Werle, junior: I have a strong suspicion that you are still carrying about that "claim of the ideal" large as life, in your coat-tail pocket.

GREGERS.

I carry it in my breast.

RELLING.

Well, wherever you carry it, I advise you not to come dunning us with it here, so long as *I* am on the premises.

GREGERS.

And if I do so none the less?

RELLING.

Then you'll go head-foremost down the stairs; now I've warned you.

HIALMAR.

[*Rising.*] Oh, but Relling——!

GREGERS.

Yes, you may turn me out——

GINA.

[*Interposing between them.*] We can't have that, Relling. But I must say, Mr. Werle, it ill becomes you to talk about vapours and taints, after all the mess you made with your stove. [*A knock at the passage door.*

HEDVIG.

Mother, there's somebody knocking.

HIALMAR.

There now, we're going to have a whole lot of people!

GINA.

I'll go—— [*Goes over and opens the door, starts, and draws back.*] Oh—oh dear!

WERLE, *in a fur coat, advances one step into the room.*

WERLE.

Excuse me; but I think my son is staying here.

GINA.

[*With a gulp.*] Yes.

HIALMAR.

[*Approaching him.*] Won't you do us the honour to——?

WERLE.

Thank you, I merely wish to speak to my son.

GREGERS.

What is it? Here I am.

WERLE.

I want a few words with you, in your room.

GREGERS.

In my room? Very well—— [*About to go.*

GINA.

No, no, your room's not in a fit state——

WERLE.

Well then, out in the passage here; I want to have a few words with you alone.

HIALMAR.

You can have them here, sir. Come into the parlour, Relling.

[HIALMAR *and* RELLING *go off to the right.* GINA *takes* HEDVIG *with her into the kitchen.*

GREGERS.

[*After a short pause.*] Well, now we are alone.

WERLE.

From something you let fall last evening, and from your coming to lodge with the Ekdals, I can't help inferring that you intend to make yourself unpleasant to me, in one way or another.

GREGERS.

I intend to open Hialmar Ekdal's eyes. He shall see his position as it really is—that is all.

WERLE.

Is t h a t the mission in life you spoke of yesterday?

GREGERS.

Yes. You have left me no other.

WERLE.

Is it I, then, that have crippled your mind, Gregers?

GREGERS.

You have crippled my whole life. I am not thinking of all that about mother—— But it's thanks to you that I am continually haunted and harassed by a guilty conscience.

WERLE.

Indeed! It is your conscience that troubles you, is it?

GREGERS.

I ought to have taken a stand against you when the trap was set for Lieutenant Ekdal. I ought to have cautioned him; for I had a misgiving as to what was in the wind.

WERLE.

Yes, that was the time to have spoken.

GREGERS.

I did not dare to, I was so cowed and spiritless. I was mortally afraid of you—not only then, but long afterwards.

WERLE.

You have got over that fear now, it appears.

GREGERS.

Yes, fortunately. The wrong done to old Ekdal, both by me and by—others, can never be undone; but Hialmar I can rescue from all the falsehood and deception that are bringing him to ruin.

WERLE.

Do you think t h a t will be doing him a kindness?

GREGERS.

I have not the least doubt of it.

WERLE.

You think our worthy photographer is the sort of man to appreciate such friendly offices?

GREGERS.

Yes, I do.

WERLE.

H'm—we shall see.

GREGERS.

Besides, if I am to go on living, I must try to find some cure for my sick conscience.

WERLE.

It will never be sound. Your conscience has been sickly from childhood. That is a legacy from your mother, Gregers—the only one she left you.

GREGERS.

[*With a scornful half-smile.*] Have you not yet forgiven her for the mistake you made in supposing she would bring you a fortune?

WERLE.

Don't let us wander from the point.—Then you hold to your purpose of setting young Ekdal upon what you imagine to be the right scent?

GREGERS.

Yes, that is my fixed resolve.

WERLE.

Well, in that case I might have spared myself this visit; for of course it is useless to ask whether you will return home with me?

GREGERS.

Quite useless.

WERLE.

And I suppose you won't enter the firm either?

GREGERS.

No.

WERLE.

Very good. But as I am thinking of marrying again, your share in the property will fall to you at once.[1]

GREGERS.

[*Quickly.*] No, I do not want that.

WERLE.

You don't want it?

GREGERS.

No, I dare not take it, for conscience' sake.

WERLE.

[*After a pause.*] Are you going up to the works again?

GREGERS.

No; I consider myself released from your service.

WERLE.

But what are you going to do?

[1] By Norwegian law, before a widower can marry again, a certain proportion of his property must be settled on his children by his former marriage.

GREGERS.

Only to fulfil my mission; nothing more.

WERLE.

Well, but afterwards? What are you going to live upon?

GREGERS.

I have laid by a little out of my salary.

WERLE.

How long will that last?

GREGERS.

I think it will last my time.

WERLE.

What do you mean?

GREGERS.

I shall answer no more questions.

WERLE.

Good-bye then, Gregers.

GREGERS.

Good-bye. [WERLE *goes*

HIALMAR.

[*Peeping in.*] He's gone, isn't he?

GREGERS.

Yes.

HIALMAR *and* RELLING *enter; also* GINA *and* HEDVIG *from the kitchen.*

RELLING.

That luncheon-party was a failure.

GREGERS.

Put on your coat, Hialmar; I want you to come for a long walk with me.

HIALMAR.

With pleasure. What was it your father wanted? Had it anything to do with me?

GREGERS.

Come along. We must have a talk. I'll go and put on my overcoat. [*Goes out by the passage door.*

GINA.

You shouldn't go out with him, Ekdal.

RELLING.

No, don't you do it. Stay where you are.

HIALMAR.

[*Gets his hat and overcoat.*] Oh, nonsense! When a friend of my youth feels impelled to open his mind to me in private——

RELLING.

But devil take it—don't you see that the fellow's mad, cracked, demented!

GINA.

There, what did I tell you! His mother before him had crazy fits like that sometimes.

HIALMAR.

The more need for a friend's watchful eye. [*To* GINA.] Be sure you have dinner ready in good time. Good-bye for the present. [*Goes out by the passage door.*

RELLING.

It's a thousand pities the fellow didn't go to hell through one of the Höidal mines.

GINA.

Good Lord! what makes you say that?

RELLING.

[*Muttering.*] Oh, I have my own reasons.

GINA.

Do you think young Werle is really mad?

RELLING.

No, worse luck; he's no madder than most other people. But one disease he has certainly got in his system.

GINA.

What is it that's the matter with him?

RELLING.

Well, I'll tell you, Mrs. Ekdal. He is suffering from an acute attack of integrity.

GINA.

Integrity?

HEDVIG.

Is that a kind of disease?

RELLING.

Yes, it's a national disease; but it only appears sporadically. [*Nods to* GINA.] Thanks for your hospitality.

[*He goes out by the passage door.*

GINA.

[*Moving restlessly to and fro.*] Ugh, that Gregers Werle —he was always a wretched creature.

HEDVIG.

[*Standing by the table, and looking searchingly at her.*] I think all this is very strange.

ACT FOURTH

HIALMAR EKDAL'S *studio. A photograph has just been taken; a camera with the cloth over it, a pedestal, two chairs, a folding table, etc., are standing out in the room. Afternoon light; the sun is going down; a little later it begins to grow dusk.*

GINA *stands in the passage doorway, with a little box and a wet glass plate in her hand, and is speaking to somebody outside.*

GINA.

Yes, certainly. When I make a promise I keep it. The first dozen shall be ready on Monday. Good afternoon.

[*Some one is heard going downstairs.* GINA *shuts the door, slips the plate into the box, and puts it into the covered camera.*

HEDVIG.

[*Comes in from the kitchen.*] Are they gone?

GINA.

[*Tidying up.*] Yes, thank goodness, I've got rid of them at last.

HEDVIG.

But can you imagine why father hasn't come home yet?

GINA.

Are you sure he's not down in Relling's room?

HEDVIG.

No, he's not; I ran down the kitchen stair just now and asked.

GINA.

And his dinner standing and getting cold, too.

HEDVIG.

Yes, I can't understand it. Father's always so careful to be home to dinner!

GINA.

Oh, he'll be here directly, you'll see.

HEDVIG.

I wish he would come; everything seems so queer today.

GINA.

[*Calls out.*] There he is!

HIALMAR EKDAL *comes in at the passage door.*

HEDVIG.

[*Going to him.*] Father! Oh what a time we've been waiting for you!

GINA.

[*Glancing sidelong at him.*] You've been out a long time, Ekdal.

HIALMAR.

[*Without looking at her.*] Rather long, yes.

[*He takes off his overcoat;* GINA *and* HEDVIG *go to help him; he motions them away.*

GINA.

Perhaps you've had dinner with Werle?

HIALMAR.

[*Hanging up his coat.*] No.

GINA.

[*Going towards the kitchen door.*] Then I'll bring some in for you.

HIALMAR.

No; let the dinner alone. I want nothing to eat.

HEDVIG.

[*Going nearer to him.*] Are you not well, father?

HIALMAR.

Well? Oh yes, well enough. We have had a tiring walk, Gregers and I.

GINA.

You didn't ought to have gone so far, Ekdal, you're not used to it.

HIALMAR.

H'm; there's many a thing a man must get used to in this world. [*Wanders about the room.*] Has any one been here whilst I was out?

GINA.

Nobody but the two sweethearts.

HIALMAR.

No new orders?

GINA.

No, not to-day.

HEDVIG.

There will be some to-morrow, father, you'll see.

HIALMAR.

I hope there will; for to-morrow I am going to set to work in real earnest.

HEDVIG.

To-morrow! Don't you remember what day it is to-morrow?

HIALMAR.

Oh yes, by-the-bye——. Well, the day after, then. Henceforth I mean to do everything myself; I shall take all the work into my own hands.

GINA.

Why, what can be the good of that, Ekdal? It'll only make your life a burden to you. I can manage the photography all right; and you can go on working at your invention.

HEDVIG.

And think of the wild duck, father,—and all the hens and rabbits and——!

HIALMAR.

Don't talk to me of all that trash! From to-morrow I will never set foot in the garret again.

HEDVIG.

Oh but, father, you promised that we should have a little party——

HIALMAR.

H'm, true. Well then, from the day after to-morrow. I should almost like to wring that cursëd wild duck's neck!

HEDVIG.

[*Shrieks.*] The wild duck!

GINA.

Well I never!

HEDVIG.

[*Shaking him.*] Oh no, father; you know it's my wild duck!

HIALMAR.

That is why I don't do it. I haven't the heart to—for your sake, Hedvig. But in my inmost soul I feel that I ought to do it. I ought not to tolerate under my roof a creature that has been through those hands.

GINA.

Why, good gracious, even if grandfather did get it from that poor creature, Pettersen——

HIALMAR.

[*Wandering about.*] There are certain claims—what shall I call them?—let me say claims of the ideal—certain obligations, which a man cannot disregard without injury to his soul.

HEDVIG.

[*Going after him.*] But think of the wild duck,—the poor wild duck!

HIALMAR.

[*Stops.*] I tell you I will spare it—for your sake. Not a hair of its head shall be—I mean, it shall be spared. There are greater problems than that to be dealt with. But you should go out a little now, Hedvig, as usual; it is getting dusk enough for you now.

HEDVIG.

No, I don't care about going out now.

HIALMAR.

Yes do; it seems to me your eyes are blinking a great deal; all these vapours in here are bad for you. The air is heavy under this roof.

HEDVIG.

Very well then, I'll run down the kitchen stair and go for a little walk. My cloak and hat?—oh, they're in my own room. Father—be sure you don't do the wild duck any harm whilst I'm out.

HIALMAR.

Not a feather of its head shall be touched. [*Draws her to him.*] You and I, Hedvig—we two——! Well, go along.

[HEDVIG *nods to her parents and goes out through the kitchen.*

HIALMAR.

[*Walks about without looking up.*] Gina.

GINA.

Yes?

HIALMAR.

From to-morrow—or, say, from the day after to-morrow—I should like to keep the household account-book myself.

GINA.

Do you want to keep the accounts too, now?

HIALMAR.

Yes; or to check the receipts at any rate.

GINA.

Lord help us! t h a t ' s soon done.

HIALMAR.

One would hardly think so; at any rate you seem to make the money go a very long way. [*Stops and looks at her.*] How do you manage it?

GINA.

It's because me and Hedvig, we need so little.

HIALMAR.

Is it the case that father is very liberally paid for the copying he does for Mr. Werle?

GINA.

I don't know as he gets anything out of the way. I don't know the rates for that sort of work.

HIALMAR.

Well, what does he get, about? Let me hear!

GINA.

Oh, it varies; I daresay it'll come to about as much as he costs us, with a little pocket-money over.

HIALMAR.

As much as he costs us! And you have never told me this before!

GINA.

No, how could I tell you? It pleased you so much to think he got everything from you.

HIALMAR.

And he gets it from Mr. Werle.

GINA.

Oh well, he has plenty and to spare, he has.

HIALMAR.

Light the lamp for me, please!

GINA.

[*Lighting the lamp.*] And of course we don't know as it's Mr. Werle himself; it may be Gråberg——

HIALMAR.

Why attempt such an evasion?

GINA.

I don't know; I only thought——

HIALMAR.

H'm!

GINA.

It wasn't me that got grandfather that copying. It was Bertha, when she used to come about us.

HIALMAR.

It seems to me your voice is trembling.

GINA.

[*Putting the lamp-shade on.*] Is it?

HIALMAR.

And your hands are shaking, are they not?

GINA.

[*Firmly.*] Come right out with it, Ekdal. What has he been saying about me?

HIALMAR.

Is it true—c a n it be true that—that there was an—an understanding between you and Mr. Werle, while you were in service there?

GINA.

That's not true. Not at that time. Mr. Werle did come after me, that's a fact. And his wife thought there was something in it, and then she made such a hocus-pocus and hurly-burly, and she hustled me and bustled me about so, that I left her service.

HIALMAR.

But afterwards, then?

GINA.

Well, then I went home. And mother—well, she wasn't the woman you took her for, Ekdal; she kept on worrying and worrying at me about one thing and another—for Mr. Werle was a widower by that time.

HIALMAR.

Well, and then?

GINA.

I suppose you've got to know it. He gave me no peace until he'd had his way.

HIALMAR.

[*Striking his hands together.*] And this is the mother of my child! How could you hide this from me?

GINA.

Yes, it was wrong of me; I ought certainly to have told you long ago.

HIALMAR.

You should have told me at the very first;—then I should have known the sort of woman you were.

GINA.

But would you have married me all the same?

HIALMAR.

How can you dream that I would?

GINA.

That's just why I didn't dare tell you anything, then. For I'd come to care for you so much, you see; and I couldn't go and make myself utterly miserable——

HIALMAR.

[*Walks about.*] And this is my Hedvig's mother. And to know that all I see before me—[*Kicks at a chair*]—all that I call my home—I owe to a favoured predecessor! Oh that scoundrel Werle!

GINA.

Do you repent of the fourteen—the fifteen years as we've lived together?

HIALMAR.

[*Placing himself in front of her.*] Have y o u not every day, every hour, repented of the spider's-web of deceit

you have spun around me? Answer me that! How could you help writing with penitence and remorse?

GINA.

Oh, my dear Ekdal, I've had all I could do to look after the house and get through the day's work——

HIALMAR.

Then you never think of reviewing your past?

GINA.

No; Heaven knows I'd almost forgotten those old stories.

HIALMAR.

Oh, this dull, callous contentment! To me there is something revolting about it. Think of it—never so much as a twinge of remorse!

GINA.

But tell me, Ekdal—what would have become of you if you hadn't had a wife like me?

HIALMAR.

Like you——!

GINA.

Yes; for you know I've always been a bit more practical and wide-awake than you. Of course I'm a year or two older.

HIALMAR.

What would have become of me!

GINA.

You'd got into all sorts of bad ways when first you met me; that you can't deny.

HIALMAR.

"Bad ways" do you call them? Little do you know what a man goes through when he is in grief and despair—especially a man of my fiery temperament.

GINA.

Well, well, that may be so. And I've no reason to crow over you, neither; for you turned a moral of a husband, that you did, as soon as ever you had a house and home of your own.—And now we'd got everything so nice and cosy about us; and me and Hedvig was just thinking we'd soon be able to let ourselves go a bit, in the way of both food and clothes.

HIALMAR.

In the swamp of deceit, yes.

GINA.

I wish to goodness that detestable being had never set his foot inside our doors!

HIALMAR.

And I, too, thought my home such a pleasant one. That was a delusion. Where shall I now find the elasticity of spirit to bring my invention into the world of reality? Perhaps it will die with me; and then it will be your past, Gina, that will have killed it.

GINA.

[*Nearly crying.*] You mustn't say such things, Ekdal. Me, that has only wanted to do the best I could for you, all my days!

HIALMAR.

I ask you, what becomes of the breadwinner's dream? When I used to lie in there on the sofa and brood over my invention, I had a clear enough presentiment that it would sap my vitality to the last drop. I felt even then that the day when I held the patent in my hand—that day—would bring my—release. And then it was my dream that you should live on after me, the dead inventor's well-to-do widow.

GINA.

[*Drying her tears.*] No, you mustn't talk like that, Ekdal. May the Lord never let me see the day I am left a widow!

HIALMAR.

Oh, the whole dream has vanished. It is all over now. All over!

GREGERS WERLE *opens the passage door cautiously and looks in.*

GREGERS.

May I come in?

HIALMAR.

Yes, come in.

[*Comes forward, his face beaming with satisfaction, and holds out both his hands to them.*] Well, dear friends——! [*Looks from one to the other, and whispers to* HIALMAR.] Have you not done it yet?

HIALMAR.

[*Aloud.*] It is done.

GREGERS.

It is?

HIALMAR.

I have passed through the bitterest moments of my life.

GREGERS.

But also, I trust, the most ennobling.

HIALMAR.

Well, at any rate, we have got through it for the present.

GINA.

God forgive you, Mr. Werle.

GREGERS.

[*In great surprise.*] But I don't understand this.

HIALMAR.

What don't you understand?

GREGERS.

After so great a crisis—a crisis that is to be the starting-point of an entirely new life—of a communion founded on truth, and free from all taint of deception——

HIALMAR.

Yes yes, I know; I know that quite well.

GREGERS.

I confidently expected, when I entered the room, to find the light of transfiguration shining upon me from both husband and wife. And now I see nothing but dulness, oppression, gloom——

GINA.

Oh, is that it? [*Takes off the lamp-shade.*

GREGERS.

You will not understand me, Mrs. Ekdal. Ah well, y o u, I suppose, need time to——. But you, Hialmar? Surely you feel a new consecration after the great crisis.

HIALMAR.

Yes, of course I do. That is—in a sort of way.

GREGERS.

For surely nothing in the world can compare with the joy of forgiving one who has erred, and raising her up to oneself in love.

HIALMAR.

Do you think a man can so easily throw off the effects of the bitter cup I have drained?

GREGERS.

No, not a c o m m o n man, perhaps. But a man like y o u——!

HIALMAR.

Good God! I know that well enough. But you must keep me up to it, Gregers. It takes time, you know.

GREGERS.

You have m u c h of the wild duck in you, Hialmar.

RELLING *has come in at the passage door.*

RELLING.

Oho! is the wild duck to the fore again?

HIALMAR.

Yes; Mr. Werle's wing-broken victim.

RELLING.

Mr. Werle's——? So it's h i m you are talking about?

HIALMAR.

Him and—ourselves.

RELLING.

[*In an undertone to* GREGERS.] May the devil fly away with you!

HIALMAR.

What is that you are saying?

RELLING.

Only uttering a heartfelt wish that this quack-salver would take himself off. If he stays here, he is quite equal to making an utter mess of life, for both of you.

GREGERS.

These two will not make a mess of life, Mr. Relling. Of course I won't speak of Hialmar—him we know. But she, too, in her innermost heart, has certainly something loyal and sincere——

GINA.

[*Almost crying.*] You might have let me alone for what I was, then.

RELLING.

[*To* GREGERS.] Is it rude to ask what you really want in this house?

GREGERS.

To lay the foundations of a true marriage.

RELLING.

So you don't think Ekdal's marriage is good enough as it is?

GREGERS.

No doubt it is as good a marriage as most others, worse luck. But a t r u e marriage it has yet to become.

HIALMAR.

You have never had eyes for the claims of the ideal, Relling.

RELLING.

Rubbish, my boy!—But excuse me, Mr. Werle: how many—in round numbers—how many true marriages have you seen in the course of your life?

GREGERS.

Scarcely a single one.

RELLING.

Nor I either.

GREGERS.

But I have seen innumerable marriages of the opposite kind. And it has been my fate to see at close quarters what ruin such a marriage can work in two human souls.

HIALMAR.

A man's whole moral basis may give away beneath his feet; t h a t is the terrible part of it.

RELLING.

Well, I can't say I've ever been exactly married, so I don't pretend to speak with authority. But this I know, that the c h i l d enters into the marriage problem. And you must leave the child in peace.

HIALMAR.

Oh—Hedvig! my poor Hedvig!

RELLING.

Yes, you must be good enough to keep Hedvig outside of all this. You two are grown-up people; you are free, in God's name, to make what mess and muddle you please of your life. But you must deal cautiously with Hedvig, I tell you; else you may do her a great injury.

HIALMAR.

An injury!

RELLING.

Yes, or she may do herself an injury—and perhaps others too.

GINA.

How can you know that, Relling?

HIALMAR.

Her sight is in no immediate danger, is it?

RELLING.

I am not talking about her sight. Hedvig is at a critical age. She may be getting all sorts of mischief into her head.

GINA.

That's true—I've noticed it already! She's taken to carrying on with the fire, out in the kitchen. She calls it playing at house-on-fire. I'm often scared for fear she really sets fire to the house.

RELLING.

You see; I thought as much.

GREGERS.

[*To* RELLING.] But how do you account for that?

RELLING.

[*Sullenly.*] Her constitution's changing, sir.

HIALMAR.

So long as the child has m e——! So long as *I* am above ground——! [*A knock at the door.*

GINA.

Hush, Ekdal; there's some one in the passage. [*Calls out.*] Come in!

[MRS. SÖRBY, *in walking dress, comes in.*

MRS. SÖRBY.

Good evening

GINA.

[*Going towards her.*] Is it really you, Bertha?

MRS. SÖRBY.

Yes, of course it is. But I'm disturbing you, I'm afraid?

HIALMAR.

No, not at all; an emissary from t h a t house——

MRS. SÖRBY.

[*To* GINA.] To tell the truth, I hoped your men-folk would be out at this time. I just ran up to have a little chat with you, and to say good-bye.

GINA.

Good-bye? Are you going away, then?

MRS. SÖRBY.

Yes, to-morrow morning,—up to Höidal. Mr. Werle started this afternoon. [*Lightly to* GREGERS.] He asked me to say good-bye for him.

GINA.

Only fancy——!

HIALMAR.

So Mr. Werle has gone? And now you are going after him?

MRS. SÖRBY.

Yes, what do you say to t h a t, Ekdal?

HIALMAR.

I say: beware!

GREGERS.

I must explain the situation. My father and Mrs. Sörby are going to be married.

HIALMAR.

Going to be married!

GINA.

Oh Bertha! So it's come to that at last!

RELLING.

[*His voice quivering a little.*] This is surely not true?

MRS. SÖRBY.

Yes, my dear Relling, it's true enough.

RELLING.

You are going to marry again?

MRS. SÖRBY.

Yes, it looks like it. Werle has got a special licence, and we are going to be married quite quietly, up at the works.

GREGERS.

Then I must wish you all happiness, like a dutiful stepson.

MRS. SÖRBY.

Thank you very much—if you mean what you say. I certainly hope it will lead to happiness, both for Werle and for me.

RELLING.

You have every reason to hope that. Mr. Werle never gets drunk—so far as I know; and I don't suppose he's in the habit of thrashing his wives, like the late lamented horse-doctor.

MRS. SÖRBY.

Come now, let Sörby rest in peace. He had his good points too

RELLING.

Mr. Werle has better ones, I have no doubt.

MRS. SÖRBY.

He hasn't frittered away all that was good in him, at any rate. The man who does that must take the consequences.

RELLING.

I shall go out with Molvik this evening.

MRS. SÖRBY.

You mustn't do that, Relling. Don't do it—for my sake.

RELLING.

There's nothing else for it. [*To* HIALMAR.] If you're going with us, come along.

GINA.

No, thank you. Ekdal doesn't go in for t h a t sort of dissertation.

HIALMAR.

[*Half aloud, in vexation.*] Oh, do hold your tongue!

RELLING.

Good-bye, Mrs.—Werle.

[*Goes out through the passage door.*

GREGERS.

[*To* MRS. SÖRBY.] You seem to know Dr. Relling pretty intimately.

MRS. SÖRBY.

Yes, we have known each other for many years. At one time it seemed as if things might have gone further between us.

GREGERS.

It was surely lucky for you that they did not.

MRS. SÖRBY.

You may well say that. But I have always been wary of acting on impulse. A woman can't afford absolutely to throw herself away.

GREGERS.

Are you not in the least afraid that I may let my father know about this old friendship?

MRS. SÖRBY.

Why, of course I have told him all about it myself.

GREGERS.

Indeed?

MRS. SÖRBY.

Your father knows every single thing that can, with any truth, be said about me. I have told him all; it was the first thing I did when I saw what was in his mind.

GREGERS.

Then you have been franker than most people, I think.

MRS. SÖRBY.

I have always been frank. We women find that the best policy.

HIALMAR.

What do you say to that, Gina?

GINA.

Oh, we're not all alike, us women aren't. Some are made one way, some another.

MRS. SÖRBY.

Well, for my part, Gina, I believe it's wisest to do as I've done. And Werle has no secrets either, on his side

That's really the great bond between us, you see. Now he can talk to me as openly as a child. He has never had the chance to do that before. Fancy a man like him, full of health and vigour, passing his whole youth and the best years of his life in listening to nothing but penitential sermons! And very often the sermons had for their text the most imaginary offences—at least so I understand.

GINA.

That's true enough.

GREGERS.

If you ladies are going to follow up this topic, I had better withdraw.

MRS. SÖRBY.

You can stay so far as that's concerned. I shan't say a word more. But I wanted you to know that I had done nothing secretly or in an underhand way. I may seem to have come in for a great piece of luck; and so I have, in a sense. But after all, I don't think I am getting any more than I am giving. I shall stand by him always, and I can tend and care for him as no one else can, now that he is getting helpless.

HIALMAR.

Getting helpless?

GREGERS.

[*To* MRS. SÖRBY.] Hush, don't speak of that here.

MRS. SÖRBY.

There is no disguising it any longer, however much he would like to. He is going blind.

HIALMAR.

[*Starts.*] Going blind? That's strange. He too going blind!

GINA.

Lots of people do.

MRS. SÖRBY.

And you can imagine what t h a t means to a business man. Well, I shall try as well as I can to make my eyes take the place of his. But I mustn't stay any longer; I have such heaps of things to do.—Oh, by-the-bye, Ekdal, I was to tell you that if there is anything Werle can do for you, you must just apply to Gråberg.

GREGERS.

That offer I am sure Hialmar Ekdal will decline with thanks.

MRS. SÖRBY.

Indeed? I don't think he used to be so——

GINA.

No, Bertha, Ekdal doesn't need anything from Mr. Werle now.

HIALMAR.

[*Slowly, and with emphasis.*] Will you present my compliments to your future husband, and say that I intend very shortly to call upon Mr. Gråberg——

GREGERS.

What! You don't really mean that?

HIALMAR.

To call upon Mr. Gråberg, I say, and obtain an account of the sum I owe his principal. I will pay that debt of honour—ha ha ha! a debt of honour, let us call it! In any case, I will pay the whole, with five per cent. interest.

GINA.

But, my dear Ekdal, God knows we haven't got the money to do it.

HIALMAR.

Be good enough to tell your future husband that I am working assiduously at my invention. Please tell him that what sustains me in this laborious task is the wish to free myself from a torturing burden of debt. That is my reason for proceeding with the invention. The entire profits shall be devoted to releasing me from my pecuniary obligations to your future husband.

MRS. SÖRBY.

Something has happened here.

HIALMAR.

Yes, you are right.

MRS. SÖRBY.

Well, good-bye. I had something else to speak to you about, Gina; but it must keep till another time. Good-bye.

[HIALMAR *and* GREGERS *bow silently.* GINA *follows* MRS. SÖRBY *to the door.*

HIALMAR.

Not beyond the threshold, Gina!

[MRS. SÖRBY *goes*; GINA *shuts the door after her.*

HIALMAR.

There now, Gregers; I have got that burden of debt off my mind.

GREGERS.

You soon will, at all events.

HIALMAR.

I think my attitude may be called correct.

GREGERS.

You are the man I have always taken you for.

HIALMAR.

In certain cases, it is impossible to disregard the claim of the ideal. Yet, as the breadwinner of a family, I cannot but writhe and groan under it. I can tell you it is no joke for a man without capital to attempt the repayment of a long-standing obligation, over which, so to speak, the dust of oblivion had gathered. But it cannot be helped: the Man in me demands his rights.

GREGERS.

[*Laying his hand on* HIALMAR'S *shoulder.*] My dear Hialmar—was it not a good thing I came?

HIALMAR.

Yes.

GREGERS.

Are you not glad to have had your true position made clear to you?

HIALMAR.

[*Somewhat impatiently.*] Yes, of course I am. But there is one thing that is revolting to my sense of justice.

GREGERS.

And what is that?

HIALMAR.

It is that—but I don't know whether I ought to express myself so unreservedly about your father.

GREGERS.

Say what you please, so far as I am concerned.

HIALMAR.

Well then, is it not exasperating to think that it is not I, but he, who will realise the true marriage?

GREGERS.

How can you say such a thing?

HIALMAR.

Because it is clearly the case. Isn't the marriage between your father and Mrs. Sörby founded upon complete confidence, upon entire and unreserved candour on both sides? They hide nothing from each other, they keep no secrets in the background; their relation is based, if I may put it so, on mutual confession and absolution.

GREGERS.

Well, what then?

HIALMAR.

Well, is not that the whole thing? Did you not yourself say that this was precisely the difficulty that had to be overcome in order to found a true marriage?

GREGERS.

But this is a totally different matter, Hialmar. You surely don't compare either yourself or your wife with those two——? Oh, you understand me well enough.

HIALMAR.

Say what you like, there is something in all this that hurts and offends my sense of justice. It really looks as if there were no just providence to rule the world.

GINA.

Oh no, Ekdal; for God's sake don't say such things.

GREGERS.

H'm; don't let us get upon those questions.

HIALMAR.

And yet, after all, I cannot but recognise the guiding finger of fate. He is going blind.

GINA.

Oh, you can't be sure of that.

HIALMAR.

There is no doubt about it. At all events there ought not to be; for in that very fact lies the righteous retribution. He has hoodwinked a confiding fellow creature in days gone by——

GREGERS.

I fear he has hoodwinked many.

HIALMAR.

And now comes inexorable, mysterious Fate, and demands Werle's own eyes.

GINA.

Oh, how dare you say such dreadful things! You make me quite scared.

HIALMAR.

It is profitable, now and then, to plunge deep into the night side of existence.

HEDVIG, *in her hat and cloak, comes in by the passage door. She is pleasurably excited, and out of breath.*

GINA.

Are you back already?

HEDVIG.

Yes, I didn't care to go any farther. It was a good thing, too; for I've just met some one at the door.

HIALMAR.

It must have been that Mrs. Sörby.

HEDVIG.

Yes.

HIALMAR.

[*Walks up and down.*] I hope you have seen her for the last time.

[*Silence.* HEDVIG, *discouraged, looks first at one and then at the other, trying to divine their frame of mind.*

HEDVIG.

[*Approaching, coaxingly.*] Father.

HIALMAR.

Well—what is it, Hedvig?

HEDVIG.

Mrs. Sörby had something with her for me.

HIALMAR.

[*Stops.*] For you?

HEDVIG.

Yes. Something for to-morrow.

GINA.

Bertha has always given you some little thing on your birthday.

HIALMAR.

What is it?

HEDVIG.

Oh, you mustn't see it now. Mother is to give it to me to-morrow morning before I'm up.

HIALMAR.

What is all this hocus-pocus that I am to be kept in the dark about!

HEDVIG.

[*Quickly.*] Oh no, you may see it if you like. It's a big letter. [*Takes the letter out of her cloak pocket.*

HIALMAR.

A letter too?

HEDVIG.

Yes, it is only a letter. The rest will come afterwards, I suppose. But fancy—a letter! I've never had a letter before. And there's "Miss" written upon it. [*Reads.*] "Miss Hedvig Ekdal." Only fancy—that's me!

HIALMAR.

Let me see that letter.

HEDVIG.

[*Hands it to him.*] There it is.

HIALMAR.

That is Mr. Werle's hand.

GINA.

Are you sure of that, Ekdal?

HIALMAR.

Look for yourself.

GINA.

Oh, what do *I* know about such-like things?

HIALMAR.

Hedvig, may I open the letter—and read it?

HEDVIG.

Yes, of course you may, if you want to.

GINA.

No, not to-night, Ekdal; it's to be kept till to-morrow.

HEDVIG.

[*Softly.*] Oh, can't you let him read it! It's sure to be something good; and then father will be glad, and everything will be nice again.

HIALMAR.

I may open it then?

HEDVIG.

Yes do, father. I'm so anxious to know what it is.

HIALMAR.

Well and good. [*Opens the letter, takes out a paper, reads it through, and appears bewildered.*] What is this——!

GINA.

What does it say?

HEDVIG.

Oh yes, father—tell us!

HIALMAR.

Be quiet. [*Reads it through again; he has turned pale, but says with self-control:*] It is a deed of gift, Hedvig.

HEDVIG.

Is it? What sort of gift am I to have?

HIALMAR.

Read for yourself.

[HEDVIG *goes over and reads for a time by the lamp.*

HIALMAR.

[*Half-aloud, clenching his hands.*] The eyes! The eyes—and then that letter!

HEDVIG.

[*Leaves off reading.*] Yes, but it seems to me that it's grandfather that's to have it.

HIALMAR.

[*Takes the letter from her.*] Gina—can you understand this?

GINA.

I know nothing whatever about it; tell me what's the matter.

HIALMAR.

Mr. Werle writes to Hedvig that her old grandfather need not trouble himself any longer with the copying, but that he can henceforth draw on the office for a hundred crowns a month——

GREGERS.

Aha!

HEDVIG.

A hundred crowns, mother! I read that.

GINA.

What a good thing for grandfather!

HIALMAR.

——a hundred crowns a month so long as he needs it —that means, of course, so long as he lives.

GINA.

Well, so he's provided for, poor dear.

HIALMAR.

But there is more to come. You didn't read that, Hedvig. Afterwards this gift is to pass on to you.

HEDVIG.

To me! The whole of it?

HIALMAR.

He says that the same amount is assured to you for the whole of your life. Do you hear that, Gina?

GINA.

Yes, I hear.

HEDVIG.

Fancy—all that money for me! [*Shakes him.*] Father, father, aren't you glad——?

HIALMAR.

[*Eluding her.*] Glad! [*Walks about.*] Oh what vistas—what perspectives open up before me! It is Hedvig, Hedvig that he showers these benefactions upon!

GINA.

Yes, because it's Hedvig's birthday——

HEDVIG.

And you'll get it all the same, father! You know quite well I shall give all the money to you and mother.

HIALMAR.

To mother, yes! There we have it.

GREGERS.

Hialmar, this is a trap he is setting for you.

HIALMAR.

Do you think it's another trap?

GREGERS.

When he was here this morning he said: Hialmar Ekdal is not the man you imagine him to be.

HIALMAR.

Not the man——!

GREGERS.

That you shall see, he said.

HIALMAR.

He meant you should see that I would let myself be bought off——!

HEDVIG.

Oh, mother what does all this mean?

GINA.

Go and take off your things.

[HEDVIG *goes out by the kitchen door, half-crying.*

GREGERS.

Yes, Hialmar—now is the time to show who was right, he or I.

HIALMAR.

[*Slowly tears the paper across, lays both pieces on the table, and says:*] Here is my answer.

GREGERS.

Just what I expected.

HIALMAR.

[*Goes over to* GINA, *who stands by the stove, and says in a low voice:*] Now please make a clean breast of it. If the connection between you and him was quite over when you—came to care for me, as you call it—why did he place us in a position to marry?

GINA.

I suppose he thought as he could come and go in our house.

HIALMAR.

Only t h a t? Was not he afraid of a possible contingency?

GINA.

I don't know what you mean.

HIALMAR.

I want to know whether—your child has the right to live under my roof.

GINA.

[*Draws herself up; her eyes flash.*] Y o u ask that!

HIALMAR.

You shall answer me this one question: Does Hedvig belong to me—or——? Well!

GINA.

[*Looking at him with cold defiance.*] I don't know.

HIALMAR.

[*Quivering a little.*] You don't know!

GINA.

How should *I* know? A creature like m e——

HIALMAR.

[*Quietly turning away from her.*] Then I have nothing more to do in this house.

GREGERS.

Take care, Hialmar! Think what you are doing!

HIALMAR.

[*Puts on his overcoat.*] In this case, there is nothing for a man like me to think twice about.

GREGERS.

Yes indeed, there are endless things to be considered. You three must be together if you are to attain the true frame of mind for self-sacrifice and forgiveness.

HIALMAR.

I don't want to attain it. Never, never! My hat! [*Takes his hat.*] My home has fallen in ruins about me. [*Bursts into tears.*] Gregers, I have no child!

HEDVIG.

[*Who has opened the kitchen door.*] What is that you're saying? [*Coming to him.*] Father, father!

GINA.

There, you see!

HIALMAR.

Don't come near me, Hedvig! Keep far away. I cannot bear to see you. Oh! those eyes——! Good-bye. [*Makes for the door.*

HEDVIG.

[*Clinging close to him and screaming loudly.*] No! no! Don't leave me!

GINA.

[*Cries out.*] Look at the child, Ekdal! Look at the child!

HIALMAR.

I will not! I cannot! I must get out—away from all this!

[*He tears himself away from* HEDVIG, *and goes out by the passage door.*

HEDVIG.

[*With despairing eyes.*] He is going away from us, mother! He is going away from us! He will never come back again!

GINA.

Don't cry, Hedvig. Father's sure to come back again.

HEDVIG.

[*Throws herself sobbing on the sofa.*] No, no, he'll never come home to us any more.

GREGERS.

Do you believe I meant all for the best, Mrs. Ekdal?

GINA.

Yes, I daresay you did; but God forgive you, all the same.

HEDVIG.

[*Lying on the sofa.*] Oh, this will kill me! What have I done to him? Mother, you must fetch him home again!

GINA.

Yes yes yes; only be quiet, and I'll go out and look for him. [*Puts on her outdoor things.*] Perhaps he's gone in to Relling's. But you mustn't lie there and cry. Promise me!

HEDVIG.

[*Weeping convulsively.*] Yes, I'll stop, I'll stop; if only father comes back!

GREGERS.

[*To* GINA, *who is going.*] After all, had you not better leave him to fight out his bitter fight to the end?

GINA.

Oh, he can do that afterwards. First of all, we must get the child quieted. [*Goes out by the passage door.*

HEDVIG.

[*Sits up and dries her tears.*] Now you must tell me what all this means. Why doesn't father want me any more?

GREGERS.

You mustn't ask that till you are a big girl—quite grown-up.

HEDVIG.

[*Sobs.*] But I can't go on being as miserable as this till I'm grown-up.—I think I know what it is.—Perhaps I'm not really father's child.

GREGERS.

[*Uneasily.*] How could that be?

HEDVIG.

Mother might have found me. And perhaps father has just got to know it; I've read of such things.

GREGERS.

Well, but if it were so——

HEDVIG.

I think he might be just as fond of me for all that. Yes, fonder almost. We got the wild duck in a present, you know, and I love it so dearly all the same.

GREGERS.

[*Turning the conversation.*] Ah, the wild duck, by-the-bye! Let us talk about the wild duck a little, Hedvig.

HEDVIG.

The poor wild duck! He doesn't want to see it any more either. Only think, he wanted to wring its neck!

GREGERS.

Oh, he won't do that.

HEDVIG.

No; but he said he would like to. And I think it was horrid of father to say it; for I pray for the wild duck every night, and ask that it may be preserved from death and all that is evil.

GREGERS.

[*Looking at her.*] Do you say your prayers every night?

HEDVIG.

Yes.

GREGERS.

Who taught you to do that?

HEDVIG.

I myself; one time when father was very ill, and had leeches on his neck, and said that death was staring him in the face.

GREGERS.

Well?

HEDVIG.

Then I prayed for him as I lay in bed; and since then I have always kept it up.

GREGERS.

And now you pray for the wild duck too?

HEDVIG.

I thought it was best to bring in the wild duck; for she was so weakly at first.

GREGERS.

Do you pray in the morning, too?

HEDVIG.

No, of course not.

GREGERS.

Why not in the morning as well?

HEDVIG.

In the morning it's light, you know, and there's nothing in particular to be afraid of.

GREGERS.

And your father was going to wring the neck of the wild duck that you love so dearly?

HEDVIG.

No; he said he ought to wring its neck, but he would spare it for my sake; and that was kind of father.

GREGERS.

[*Coming a little nearer.*] But suppose y o u were to sacrifice the wild duck of your own free will for h i s sake.

HEDVIG.

[*Rising.*] The wild duck!

GREGERS.

Suppose you were to make a free-will offering, for his sake, of the dearest treasure you have in the world!

HEDVIG.

Do you think t h a t would do any good?

GREGERS.

Try it, Hedvig.

HEDVIG.

[*Softly, with flashing eyes.*] Yes, I will try it.

GREGERS.

Have you really the courage for it, do you think?

HEDVIG.

I'll ask grandfather to shoot the wild duck for me.

GREGERS.

Yes, do. But not a word to your mother about it.

HEDVIG.

Why not?

GREGERS.

She doesn't understand us.

HEDVIG.

The wild duck! I'll try it to-morrow morning.

[GINA *comes in by the passage door.*

HEDVIG.

[*Going towards her.*] Did you find him, mother?

GINA.

No, but I heard as he had called and taken Relling with him.

GREGERS.

Are you sure of that?

GINA.

Yes, the porter's wife said so. Molvik went with them too, she said.

GREGERS.

This evening, when his mind so sorely needs to wrestle in solitude——!

GINA.

[*Takes off her things.*] Yes, men are strange creatures, so they are. The Lord only knows where Relling has dragged him to! I ran over to Madam Eriksen's, but they weren't t h e r e.

HEDVIG.

[*Struggling to keep back her tears.*] Oh, if he should never come home any more!

GREGERS.

He w i l l come home again. I shall have news to give him to-morrow; and then you shall see h o w he comes home. You may rely upon that, Hedvig, and sleep in peace. Good-night.

[*He goes out by the passage door.*

HEDVIG.

[*Throws herself sobbing on* GINA'S *neck.*] Mother, mother!

GINA.

[*Puts her shoulder and sighs.*] Ah yes; Relling was right, he was. That's what comes of it when crazy creatures go about presenting the claims of the—what-you-may-call-it.

ACT FIFTH

HIALMAR EKDAL'S *studio. Cold, grey, morning light. Wet snow lies upon the large panes of the sloping roof-window.*

GINA *comes from the kitchen with an apron and bib on, and carrying a dusting-brush and a duster; she goes towards the sitting-room door. At the same moment* HEDVIG *comes hurriedly in from the passage.*

GINA.

[*Stops.*] Well?

HEDVIG.

Oh, mother, I almost think he's down at Relling's——

GINA.

There, you see!

HEDVIG.

——because the porter's wife says she could hear that Relling had two people with him when he came home last night.

GINA.

That's just what I thought.

HEDVIG.

But it's no use his being there, if he won't come up to us.

GINA.

I'll go down and speak to him at all events.

OLD EKDAL, *in dressing-gown and slippers, and with a lighted pipe, appears at the door of his room.*

EKDAL.

Hialmar—— Isn't Hialmar at home?

GINA.

No, he's gone out.

EKDAL.

So early? And in such a tearing snowstorm? Well well; just as he pleases; I can take my morning walk alone.

[*He slides the garret door aside;* HEDVIG *helps him; he goes in; she closes it after him.*

HEDVIG.

[*In an undertone.*] Only think, mother, when poor grandfather hears that father is going to leave us.

GINA.

Oh, nonsense; grandfather mustn't hear anything about it. It was a heaven's mercy he wasn't at home yesterday in all that hurly-burly.

HEDVIG.

Yes, but—— [GREGERS *comes in by the passage door.*

GREGERS.

Well, have you any news of him?

GINA.

They say he's down at Relling's.

GREGERS.

At Relling's! Has he really been out with those creatures?

GINA.

Yes, like enough.

GREGERS.

When he ought to have been yearning for solitude, to collect and clear his thoughts——

GINA.

Yes, you may well say so.

RELLING *enters from the passage.*

HEDVIG.

[*Going to him.*] Is father in your room?

GINA.

[*At the same time.*] Is he there?

RELLING.

Yes, to be sure he is.

HEDVIG.

And you never let us know!

RELLING.

Yes; I'm a brute. But in the first place I had to look after the other brute; I mean our dæmonic friend, of course; and then I fell so dead asleep that——

GINA.

What does Ekdal say to-day?

RELLING.

He says nothing whatever.

HEDVIG.

Doesn't he speak?

RELLING.

Not a blessed word.

GREGERS.

No no; I can understand that very well.

GINA.

But what's he doing then?

RELLING.

He's lying on the sofa, snoring.

GINA.

Oh is he? Yes, Ekdal's a rare one to snore.

HEDVIG.

Asleep? Can he sleep?

RELLING.

Well, it certainly looks like it.

GREGERS.

No wonder, after the spiritual conflict that has rent him——

GINA.

And then he's never been used to gadding about out of doors at night.

HEDVIG.

Perhaps it's a good thing that he's getting some sleep, mother.

GINA.

Of course it is; and we must take care we don't wake him up too early. Thank you, Relling. I must get the house cleaned up a bit now, and then—— Come and help me, Hedvig.

[GINA *and* HEDVIG *go into the sitting-room.*

GREGERS.

[*Turning to* RELLING.] What is your explanation of the spiritual tumult that is now going on in Hialmar Ekdal?

RELLING.

Devil a bit of a spiritual tumult have *I* noticed in him.

GREGERS.

What! Not at such a crisis, when his whole life has been placed on a new foundation——? How can you think that such an individuality as Hialmar's——?

RELLING.

Oh, individuality—he! If he ever had any tendency to the abnormal developments you call individuality, I can assure you it was rooted out of him while he was still in his teens.

GREGERS.

That would be strange indeed,—considering the loving care with which he was brought up.

RELLING.

By those two high-flown, hysterical maiden aunts, you mean?

GREGERS.

Let me tell you that they were women who never forgot the claim of the ideal—but of course you will only jeer at me again.

RELLING.

No, I'm in no humour for that. I know all about those ladies; for he has ladled out no end of rhetoric on the subject of his "two soul-mothers." But I don't think he has much to thank them for. Ekdal's misfortune is that in his own circle he has always been looked upon as a shining light——

GREGERS.

Not without reason, surely. Look at the depth of his mind!

RELLING.

I have never discovered it. That his father believed in it I don't so much wonder; the old lieutenant has been an ass all his days.

GREGERS.

He has had a child-like mind all his days; that is what you cannot understand.

RELLING.

Well, so be it. But then, when our dear, sweet Hialmar went to college, he at once passed for the great light of the future amongst his comrades too! He was handsome, the rascal—red and white—a shop-girl's dream of manly beauty; and with his superficially emotional temperament, and his sympathetic voice, and his talent for declaiming other people's verses and other people's thoughts——

GREGERS.

[*Indignantly.*] Is it Hialmar Ekdal you are talking about in this strain?

RELLING.

Yes, with your permission; I am simply giving you an inside view of the idol you are grovelling before.

GREGERS.

I should hardly have thought I was quite stone blind.

RELLING.

Yes you are—or not far from it. You are a sick man, too, you see.

GREGERS.

You are right there.

RELLING.

Yes. Yours is a complicated case. First of all there is that plaguy integrity-fever; and then—what's worse—you are always in a delirium of hero-worship: you must always have something to adore, outside yourself.

GREGERS.

Yes, I must certainly seek it outside myself.

RELLING.

But you make such shocking mistakes about every new phœnix you think you have discovered. Here again you have come to a cotter's cabin with your claim of the ideal; and the people of the house are insolvent.

GREGERS.

If you don't think better than that of Hialmar Ekdal, what pleasure can you find in being everlastingly with him?

RELLING.

Well, you see, I'm supposed to be a sort of a doctor—save the mark! I can't but give a hand to the poor sick folk who live under the same roof with me.

GREGERS.

Oh, indeed! Hialmar Ekdal is sick too, is he!

RELLING.

Most people are, worse luck.

GREGERS.

And what remedy are you applying in Hialmar's case?

RELLING.

My usual one. I am cultivating the life-illusion[1] in him.

[1] "Livslögnen," literally "the life-lie."

GREGERS.

Life—illusion? I didn't catch what you said.

RELLING.

Yes, I said illusion. For illusion, you know, is the stimulating principle.

GREGERS.

May I ask with what illusion Hialmar is inoculated?

RELLING.

No, thank you; I don't betray professional secrets to quacksalvers. You would probably go and muddle his case still more than you have already. But my method is infallible. I have applied it to Molvik as well. I have made him "dæmonic." That's the blister I have to put on h i s neck.

GREGERS.

Is he not really dæmonic then?

RELLING.

What the devil do you mean by dæmonic! It's only a piece of gibberish I've invented to keep up a spark of life in him. But for that, the poor harmless creature would have succumbed to self-contempt and despair many a long year ago. And then the old lieutenant! But he has hit upon his own cure, you see.

GREGERS.

Lieutenant Ekdal? What of him?

RELLING.

Just think of the old bear-hunter shutting himself up in that dark garret to shoot rabbits! I tell you there is not a happier sportsman in the world than that old man pottering about in there among all that rubbish. The four or five withered Christmas-trees he has saved up are the same to him as the whole great fresh Höidal forest; the cock and the hens are big game-birds in the fir-tops; and the rabbits that flop about the garret floor are the bears he has to battle with—the mighty hunter of the mountains!

GREGERS.

Poor unfortunate old man! Yes; he has indeed had to narrow the ideals of his youth.

RELLING.

While I think of it, Mr. Werle, junior—don't use that foreign word: ideals. We have the excellent native word: lies.

GREGERS.

Do you think the two things are related?

RELLING.

Yes, just about as closely as typhus and putrid fever.

GREGERS.

Dr. Relling, I shall not give up the struggle until I have rescued Hialmar from your clutches!

RELLING.

So much the worse for him. Rob the average man of his life-illusion, and you rob him of his happiness at the

same stroke. [*To* HEDVIG, *who comes in from the sitting-room.*] Well, little wild-duck-mother, I'm just going down to see whether papa is still lying meditating upon that wonderful invention of his.

[*Goes out by the passage door.*

GREGERS.

[*Approaches* HEDVIG.] I can see by your face that you have not yet done it.

HEDVIG.

What? Oh, that about the wild duck! No.

GREGERS.

I suppose your courage failed when the time came.

HEDVIG.

No, that wasn't it. But when I awoke this morning and remembered what we had been talking about, it seemed so strange.

GREGERS.

Strange?

HEDVIG.

Yes, I don't know——. Yesterday evening, at the moment, I thought there was something so delightful about it; but since I have slept and thought of it again, it somehow doesn't seem worth while.

GREGERS.

Ah, I thought you could not have grown up quite unharmed in this house.

HEDVIG.

I don't care about that, if only father would come up——

GREGERS.

Oh, if only your eyes had been opened to that which gives life its value—if you possessed the true, joyous, fearless spirit of sacrifice, you would soon see h o w he would come up to you.—But I believe in you still, Hedvig.

[*He goes out by the passage door.*

[HEDVIG *wanders about the room for a time; she is on the point of going into the kitchen when a knock is heard at the garret door.* HEDVIG *goes over and opens it a little; old* EKDAL *comes out; she pushes the door to again.*

EKDAL.

H'm, it's not much fun to take one's morning walk alone.

HEDVIG.

Wouldn't you like to go shooting, grandfather?

EKDAL.

It's not the weather for it to-day. It's so dark there, you can scarcely see where you're going.

HEDVIG.

Do you never want to shoot anything besides the rabbits?

EKDAL.

Do you think the rabbits aren't good enough?

HEDVIG.

Yes, but what about the wild duck?

EKDAL.

Ho-ho! are you afraid I shall shoot your wild duck? Never in the world. Never.

HEDVIG.

No, I suppose you couldn't; they say it's very difficult to shoot wild ducks.

EKDAL.

Couldn't! Should rather think I could.

HEDVIG.

How would you set about it, grandfather?—I don't mean with my wild duck, but with others?

EKDAL.

I should take care to shoot them in the breast, you know; that's the surest place. And then you must shoot against the feathers, you see—not the way of the feathers.

HEDVIG.

Do they die then, grandfather?

EKDAL.

Yes, they die right enough—when you shoot properly. Well, I must go and brush up a bit. H'm—understand —h'm. [*Goes into his room.*

HEDVIG *waits a little, glances towards the sitting-room door, goes over to the bookcase, stands on tip-toe, takes the double-barrelled pistol down from the shelf, and looks at it.* GINA, *with brush and duster, comes from the sitting-room.* HEDVIG *hastily lays down the pistol, unobserved.*

GINA.

Don't stand raking amongst father's things, Hedvig.

HEDVIG.

[*Goes away from the bookcase.*] I was only going to tidy up a little.

GINA.

You'd better go into the kitchen, and see if the coffee's keeping hot; I'll take his breakfast on a tray, when I go down to him.

[HEDVIG *goes out.* GINA *begins to sweep and clean up the studio. Presently the passage door is opened with hesitation, and* HIALMAR EKDAL *looks in. He has on his overcoat, but not his hat; he is unwashed, and his hair is dishevelled and unkempt. His eyes are dull and heavy.*

GINA.

[*Standing with the brush in her hand, and looking at him.*] Oh, there now, Ekdal—so you've come after all?

HIALMAR.

[*Comes in and answers in a toneless voice.*] I come—only to depart again immediately.

GINA.

Yes, yes, I suppose so. But, Lord help us! what a sight you are!

HIALMAR.

A sight?

GINA.

And your nice winter coat too! Well, that's done for.

HEDVIG.

[*At the kitchen door.*] Mother, hadn't I better——? [*Sees* HIALMAR, *gives a loud scream of joy, and runs to him.*] Oh, father, father!

HIALMAR.

[*Turns away and makes a gesture of repulsion.*] Away, away, away! [*To* GINA.] Keep her away from me, I say!

GINA.

[*In a low tone.*] Go into the sitting-room, Hedvig.

[HEDVIG *does so without a word.*

HIALMAR.

[*Fussily pulls out the table-drawer.*] I must have my books with me. Where are my books?

GINA.

Which books?

HIALMAR.

My scientific books, of course; the technical magazines I require for my invention.

GINA.

[*Searches in the bookcase.*] Is it these here paper-covered ones?

HIALMAR.

Yes, of course

GINA.

[*Lays a heap of magazines on the table.*] Shan't I get Hedvig to cut them for you?

HIALMAR.

I don't require to have them cut for me. [*Short silence.*

GINA.

Then you're still set on leaving us, Ekdal?

HIALMAR.

[*Rummaging amongst the books.*] Yes, that is a matter of course, I should think.

GINA.

Well, well.

HIALMAR.

[*Vehemently.*] How can I live here, to be stabbed to the heart every hour of the day?

GINA.

God forgive you for thinking such vile things of me.

HIALMAR.

Prove——!

GINA.

I think it's y o u as has got to prove.

HIALMAR.

After a past like yours? There are certain claims—I may almost call them claims of the ideal——

GINA.

But what about grandfather? What's to become of h i m, poor dear?

HIALMAR.

I know my duty; my helpless father will come with me. I am going out into the town to make arrangements——. H'm—[*hesitatingly*] has any one found my hat on the stairs?

GINA.

No. Have you lost your hat?

HIALMAR.

Of course I had it on when I came in last night; there's no doubt about that; but I couldn't find it this morning.

GINA.

Lord help us! where h a v e you been to with those two ne'er-do-weels?

HIALMAR.

Oh, don't bother me about trifles. Do you suppose I am in the mood to remember details?

GINA.

If only you haven't caught cold, Ekdal.

[*Goes out into the kitchen.*

HIALMAR.

[*Talks to himself in a low tone of irritation, whilst he empties the table-drawer.*] You're a scoundrel, Relling!—You're a low fellow!—Ah, you shameless tempter!—I wish I could get some one to stick a knife into you!

[*He lays some old letters on one side, finds the torn document of yesterday, takes it up and looks at the pieces; puts it down hurriedly as* GINA *enters.*

GINA.

[*Sets a tray with coffee, etc., on the table.*] Here's a drop of something hot, if you'd fancy it. And there's some bread and butter and a snack of salt meat.

HIALMAR.

[*Glancing at the tray.*] Salt meat? Never under this roof! It's true I have not had a mouthful of solid food for nearly twenty-four hours; but no matter.—My memoranda! The commencement of my autobiography! What has become of my diary, and all my important papers? [*Opens the sitting-room door but draws back.*] She is there too!

GINA.

Good Lord! the child must be s o m e w h e r e!

HIALMAR.

Come out.

[*He makes room,* HEDVIG *comes, scared, into the studio.*

HIALMAR.

[*With his hand upon the door-handle, says to* GINA:] In these, the last moments I spend in my former home, I wish to be spared from interlopers——

[*Goes into the room.*

HEDVIG.

[*With a bound towards her mother, asks softly, trembling.*] Does that mean me?

GINA.

Stay out in the kitchen, Hedvig; or, no—you'd best go into your own room. [*Speaks to* HIALMAR *as she goes in to him.*] Wait a bit, Ekdal; don't rummage so in the drawers; *I* know where everything is.

HEDVIG.

[*Stands a moment immovable, in terror and perplexity, biting her lips to keep back the tears; then she clenches her hands convulsively, and says softly:*] The wild duck.

[*She steals over and takes the pistol from the shelf, opens the garret door a little way, creeps in, and draws the door to after her.*

[HIALMAR *and* GINA *can be heard disputing in the sitting-room.*

HIALMAR.

[*Comes in with some manuscript books and old loose papers, which he lays upon the table.*] That portmanteau is of no use! There are a thousand and one things I must drag with me.

GINA.

[*Following with the portmanteau.*] Why not leave all the rest for the present, and only take a shirt and a pair of woollen drawers with you?

HIALMAR.

Whew!—all these exhausting preparations——!

[*Pulls off his overcoat and throws it upon the sofa.*

GINA.

And there's the coffee getting cold.

HIALMAR.

H'm.

[*Drinks a mouthful without thinking of it, and then another.*

GINA.

[*Dusting the backs of the chairs.*] A nice job you'll have to find such another big garret for the rabbits.

HIALMAR.

What! Am I to drag all those rabbits with me too?

GINA.

You don't suppose grandfather can get on without his rabbits.

HIALMAR.

He must just get used to doing without them. Have not *I* to sacrifice very much greater things than rabbits!

GINA.

[*Dusting the bookcase.*] Shall I put the flute in the portmanteau for you?

HIALMAR.

No. No flute for me. But give me the pistol!

GINA.

Do you want to take the pigstol with you?

HIALMAR.

Yes. My loaded pistol.

GINA.

[*Searching for it.*] It's gone. He must have taken it in with him.

HIALMAR.

Is he in the garret?

GINA.

Yes, of course he's in the garret.

HIALMAR.

H'm—poor lonely old man.

[*He takes a piece of bread and butter, eats it, and finishes his cup of coffee.*

GINA.

If we hadn't have let that room, you could have moved in there.

HIALMAR.

And continued to live under the same roof with——! Never,—never!

GINA.

But couldn't you put up with the sitting-room for a day or two? You could have it all to yourself.

HIALMAR.

Never within these walls!

GINA.

Well then, down with Relling and Molvik.

HIALMAR.

Don't mention those wretches' names to me! The very thought of them almost takes away my appetite.—Oh no, I must go out into the storm and the snow-drift,—go from house to house and seek shelter for my father and myself.

GINA.

But you've got no hat, Ekdal! You've been and lost your hat, you know.

HIALMAR.

Oh those two brutes, those slaves of all the vices! A hat must be procured. [*Takes another piece of bread and butter.*] Some arrangement must be made. For I have no mind to throw away my life, either.

[*Looks for something on the tray.*

GINA.

What are you looking for?

HIALMAR.

Butter.

GINA.

I'll get some at once. [*Goes out into the kitchen.*

HIALMAR.

[*Calls after her.*] Oh it doesn't matter; dry bread is good enough for me.

GINA.

[*Brings a dish of butter.*] Look here; this is fresh churned.

[*She pours out another cup of coffee for him; he seats himself on the sofa, spreads more butter on the already buttered bread, and eats and drinks awhile in silence.*

HIALMAR.

Could I, without being subject to intrusion—intrusion of any sort—could I live in the sitting-room there for a day or two?

GINA.

Yes, to be sure you could, if you only would.

HIALMAR.

For I see no possibility of getting all father's things out in such a hurry.

GINA.

And besides, you've surely got to tell him first as you don't mean to live with us others no more.

HIALMAR.

[*Pushes away his coffee cup.*] Yes, there is that too; I shall have to lay bare the whole tangled story to him——. I must turn matters over; I must have breathing-time; I cannot take all these burdens on my shoulders in a single day.

GINA.

No, especially in such horrible weather as it is outside.

HIALMAR.

[*Touching* WERLE'S *letter.*] I see that paper is still lying about here.

GINA.

Yes, *I* haven't touched it.

HIALMAR.

So far as I am concerned it is mere waste paper——

GINA.

Well, *I* have certainly no notion of making any use of it.

HIALMAR.

——but we had better not let it get lost all the same;—in all the upset when I move, it might easily——

GINA.

I'll take good care of it, Ekdal.

HIALMAR.

The donation is in the first instance made to father, and it rests with him to accept or decline it.

GINA.

[*Sighs.*] Yes, poor old father——

HIALMAR.

To make quite safe—— Where shall I find some gum?

GINA.

[*Goes to the bookcase.*] Here's the gum-pot.

HIALMAR.

And a brush?

GINA.

The brush is here too. [*Brings him the things.*

HIALMAR.

[*Takes a pair of scissors.*] Just a strip of paper at the back——[*Clips and gums.*] Far be it from me to lay hands upon what is not my own—and least of all upon what belongs to a destitute old man—and to—the other as well.—There now. Let it lie there for a time; and when it is dry, take it away. I wish never to see that document again. Never!

GREGERS WERLE *enters from the passage.*

GREGERS.

[*Somewhat surprised.*] What,—are you sitting here, Hialmar?

HIALMAR.

[*Rises hurriedly.*] I had sunk down from fatigue.

GREGERS.

You have been having breakfast, I see.

HIALMAR.

The body sometimes makes its claims felt too.

GREGERS.

What have you decided to do?

HIALMAR.

For a man like me, there is only one course possible. I am just putting my most important things together. But it takes time, you know.

GINA.

[*With a touch of impatience.*] Am I to get the room ready for you, or am I to pack your portmanteau?

HIALMAR.

[*After a glance of annoyance at* GREGERS.] Pack—and get the room ready!

GINA.

[*Takes the portmanteau.*] Very well; then I'll put in the shirt and the other things.

[*Goes into the sitting-room and draws the door to after her.*

GREGERS.

[*After a short silence.*] I never dreamed that this would be the end of it. Do you really feel it a necessity to leave house and home?

HIALMAR.

[*Wanders about restlessly.*] What would you have me do?—I am not fitted to bear unhappiness, Gregers. I must feel secure and at peace in my surroundings.

GREGERS.

But can you not feel that here? Just try it. I should have thought you had firm ground to build upon now—if only you start afresh. And remember, you have your invention to live for.

HIALMAR.

Oh don't talk about my invention. It's perhaps still in the dim distance.

GREGERS.

Indeed!

HIALMAR.

Why, great heavens, what would you have me invent? Other people have invented almost everything already. It becomes more and more difficult every day——

GREGERS.

And you have devoted so much labour to it.

HIALMAR.

It was that blackguard Relling that urged me to it.

GREGERS.

Relling?

HIALMAR.

Yes, it was he that first made me realise my aptitude for making some notable discovery in photography.

GREGERS.

Aha—it was Relling!

HIALMAR.

Oh, I have been so truly happy over it! Not so much for the sake of the invention itself, as because Hedvig believed in it—believed in it with a child's whole eagerness of faith.—At least, I have been fool enough to go and imagine that she believed in it.

GREGERS.

Can you really think that Hedvig has been false towards you?

HIALMAR.

I can think anything now. It is Hedvig that stands in my way. She will blot out the sunlight from my whole life.

GREGERS.

Hedvig! Is it Hedvig you are talking of? How should s h e blot out your sunlight?

HIALMAR.

[*Without answering.*] How unutterably I have loved that child! How unutterably happy I have felt every time I came home to my humble room, and she flew to meet me, with her sweet little blinking eyes. Oh, confiding fool that I have been! I loved her unutterably;—and I yielded myself up to the dream, the delusion, that she loved me unutterably in return.

GREGERS.

Do you call t h a t a delusion?

HIALMAR.

How should I know? I can get nothing out of Gina; and besides, she is totally blind to the ideal side of these complications. But to you I feel impelled to open my mind, Gregers. I cannot shake off this frightful doubt —perhaps Hedvig has never really and honestly loved me.

GREGERS.

What would you say if she were to give you a proof of her love? [*Listens.*] What's that? I thought I heard the wild duck——?

HIALMAR.

It's the wild duck quacking. Father's in the garret.

GREGERS.

Is he? [*His face lights up with joy.*] I say you may yet have proof that your poor misunderstood Hedvig loves you!

HIALMAR.

Oh, what proof can she give me? I dare not believe in any assurances from that quarter.

GREGERS.

Hedvig does not know what deceit means.

HIALMAR.

Oh Gregers, that is just what I cannot be sure of. Who knows what Gina and that Mrs. Sörby may many a time have sat here whispering and tattling about? And Hedvig usually has her ears open, I can tell you. Perhaps the deed of gift was not such a surprise to her, after all. In fact, I'm not sure but that I noticed something of the sort.

GREGERS.

What spirit is this that has taken possession of you?

HIALMAR.

I have had my eyes opened. Just you notice;—you'll see, the deed of gift is only a beginning. Mrs. Sörby has always been a good deal taken up with Hedvig; and now she has the power to do whatever she likes for the child. They can take her from me whenever they please.

GREGERS.

Hedvig will never, never leave you.

HIALMAR.

Don't be so sure of that. If only they beckon to her and throw out a golden bait——! And oh! I have loved her so unspeakably! I would have counted it my highest happiness to take her tenderly by the hand and lead her, as one leads a timid child through a great dark empty room!—I am cruelly certain now that the poor photographer in his humble attic has never really and truly been anything to her. She has only cunningly contrived to keep on a good footing with him until the time came.

GREGERS.

You don't believe that yourself, Hialmar.

HIALMAR.

That is just the terrible part of it—I don't know what to believe,—I never can know it. But can you really doubt that it must be as I say? Ho-ho, you have far too much faith in the claim of the ideal, my good Gregers! If those others came, with the glamour of wealth about them, and called to the child:—"Leave him: come to us: here life awaits you——!"

GREGERS.

[*Quickly.*] Well, what then?

HIALMAR.

If I then asked her: Hedvig, are you willing to renounce that life for me? [*Laughs scornfully.*] No thank you! You would soon hear what answer I should get.

[*A pistol shot is heard from within the garret.*

GREGERS.

[*Loudly and joyfully.*] Hialmar!

HIALMAR.

There now; he must needs go shooting too.

GINA.

[*Comes in.*] Oh Ekdal, I can hear grandfather blazing away in the garret by hisself.

HIALMAR.

I'll look in——

GREGERS.

[*Eagerly, with emotion.*] Wait a moment! Do you know what that was?

HIALMAR.

Yes, of course I know.

GREGERS.

No you don't know. But *I* do. That was the proof!

HIALMAR.

What proof?

GREGERS.

It was a child's free-will offering. She has got your father to shoot the wild duck.

HIALMAR.

To shoot the wild duck!

GINA.

Oh, think of that——!

HIALMAR.

What was t h a t for?

GREGERS.

She wanted to sacrifice to you her most cherished possession; for then she thought you would surely come to love her again.

HIALMAR.

[*Tenderly, with emotion.*] Oh, poor child!

GINA.

What things she does think of!

GREGERS.

She only wanted your love again, Hialmar. She could not live without it.

GINA.

[*Struggling with her tears.*] There, you can see for yourself, Ekdal.

HIALMAR.

Gina, where is she?

GINA.

[*Sniffs.*] Poor dear, she's sitting out in the kitchen, I dare say.

HIALMAR.

[*Goes over, tears open the kitchen door, and says:*] Hedvig, come, come in to me! [*Looks round.*] No, she's not here.

GINA.

Then she must be in her own little room.

HIALMAR.

[*Without.*] No, she's not here either. [*Comes in.*] She must have gone out.

GINA.

Yes, you wouldn't have her anywheres in the house.

HIALMAR.

Oh, if she would only come home quickly, so that I can tell her—— Everything will come right now, Gregers; now I believe we can begin life afresh.

GREGERS.

[*Quietly.*] I knew it; I knew the child would make amends.

OLD EKDAL *appears at the door of his room; he is in full uniform, and is busy buckling on his sword.*

HIALMAR.

[*Astonished.*] Father! Are you there?

GINA.

Have you been firing in your room?

EKDAL.

[*Resentfully, approaching.*] So you go shooting alone, do you, Hialmar?

HIALMAR.

[*Excited and confused.*] Then it wasn't you that fired that shot in the garret?

EKDAL.

M e that fired? H'm.

GREGERS.

[*Calls out to* HIALMAR.] She has shot the wild duck herself!

HIALMAR.

What can it mean? [*Hastens to the garret door, tears it aside, looks in and calls loudly:*] Hedvig!

GINA.

[*Runs to the door.*] Good God, what's that!

HIALMAR.

[*Goes in.*] She's lying on the floor!

GREGERS.

Hedvig! lying on the floor! [*Goes in to* HIALMAR.

GINA.

[*At the same time.*] Hedvig! [*Inside the garret.*] No, no, no!

EKDAL.

Ho-ho! does she go shooting too, now?

[HIALMAR, GINA, *and* GREGERS *carry* HEDVIG *into the studio; in her dangling right hand she holds the pistol fast clasped in her fingers.*

HIALMAR.

[*Distracted.*] The pistol has gone off. She has wounded herself. Call for help! Help!

GINA.

[*Runs into the passage and calls down.*] Relling! Relling! Doctor Relling; come up as quick as you can!

[HIALMAR *and* GREGERS *lay* HEDVIG *down on the sofa.*

EKDAL.

[*Quietly.*] The woods avenge themselves.

HIALMAR.

[*On his knees beside* HEDVIG.] She'll soon come to now. She's coming to——; yes, yes, yes.

GINA.

[*Who has come in again.*] Where has she hurt herself? I can't see anything——

[RELLING *comes hurriedly, and immediately after him* MOLVIK; *the latter without his waistcoat and necktie, and with his coat open.*

RELLING.

What's the matter here?

GINA.

They say Hedvig has shot herself.

HIALMAR.

Come and help us!

RELLING.

Shot herself!

[*He pushes the table aside and begins to examine her.*

HIALMAR.

[*Kneeling and looking anxiously up at him.*] It can't be dangerous? Speak, Relling! She is scarcely bleeding at all. It can't be dangerous?

RELLING.

How did it happen?

HIALMAR.

Oh, we don't know——!

GINA.

She wanted to shoot the wild duck.

RELLING.

The wild duck?

HIALMAR.

The pistol must have gone off.

RELLING.

H'm. Indeed.

EKDAL.

The woods avenge themselves. But I'm not afraid, all the same.

[*Goes into the garret and closes the door after him.*

HIALMAR.

Well, Relling,—why don't you say something?

RELLING.

The ball has entered the breast.

HIALMAR.

Yes, but she's coming to!

RELLING.

Surely you can see that Hedvig is dead.

GINA.

[*Bursts into tears.*] Oh my child, my child!

GREGERS.

[*Huskily.*] In the depths of the sea——

HIALMAR.

[*Jumps up.*] No, no, she m u s t live! Oh, for God's sake, Relling—only a moment—only just till I can tell her how unspeakably I loved her all the time!

RELLING.

The bullet has gone through her heart. Internal hemorrhage. Death must have been instantaneous.

HIALMAR.

And I! I hunted her from me like an animal! And she crept terrified into the garret and died for love of me! [*Sobbing.*] I can never atone to her! I can never tell her——! [*Clenches his hands and cries, upwards.*] O thou above——! If thou be indeed! Why hast thou done this thing to me?

GINA.

Hush, hush, you mustn't go on that awful way. We had no right to keep her, I suppose.

MOLVIK.

The child is not dead, but sleepeth.

RELLING.

Bosh!

HIALMAR.

[*Becomes calm, goes over to the sofa, folds his arms, and looks at* HEDVIG.] There she lies so stiff and still.

RELLING.

[*Tries to loosen the pistol.*] She's holding it so tight, so tight.

GINA.

No, no, Relling, don't break her fingers; let the pistol be.

HIALMAR.

She shall take it with her.

GINA.

Yes, let her. But the child mustn't lie here for a show. She shall go to her own room, so she shall. Help me, Ekdal.

[HIALMAR *and* GINA *take* HEDVIG *between them.*

HIALMAR.

[*As they are carrying her.*] Oh Gina, Gina, can you survive this!

GINA.

We must help each other to bear it. For now at least she belongs to both of us.

MOLVIK.

[*Stretches out his arms and mumbles.*] Blessed be the Lord; to earth thou shalt return; to earth thou shalt return——

RELLING.

[*Whispers.*] Hold your tongue, you fool; you're drunk.

[HIALMAR *and* GINA *carry the body out through the kitchen door.* RELLING *shuts it after them.* MOLVIK *slinks out into the passage.*

RELLING.

[*Goes over to* GREGERS *and says:*] No one shall ever convince me that the pistol went off by accident.

GREGERS.

[*Who has stood terrified, with convulsive twitchings.*] Who can say how the dreadful thing happened?

RELLING.

The powder has burnt the body of her dress. She must have pressed the pistol right against her breast and fired.

GREGERS.

Hedvig has not died in vain. Did you not see how sorrow set free what is noble in him?

RELLING.

Most people are ennobled by the actual presence of death. But how long do you suppose this nobility will last in h i m?

GREGERS.

Why should it not endure and increase throughout his life?

RELLING.

Before a year is over, little Hedvig will be nothing to him but a pretty theme for declamation.

GREGERS.

How dare you say that of Hialmar Ekdal?

RELLING.

We will talk of this again, when the grass has first withered on her grave. Then you'll hear him spouting about "the child too early torn from her father's heart;" then you'll see him steep himself in a syrup of sentiment and self-admiration and self-pity. Just you wait!

GREGERS.

If you are right and I am wrong, then life is not worth living.

RELLING.

Oh, life would be quite tolerable, after all, if only we could be rid of the confounded duns that keep on pestering us, in our poverty, with the claim of the ideal.

GREGERS.

[*Looking straight before him.*] In that case, I am glad that my destiny is what it is.

RELLING.

May I inquire,—what is your destiny?

GREGERS.

[*Going.*] To be the thirteenth at table.

RELLING.

The devil it is.

THE END.

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